

AN
E S S A Y
ON THE
P R O P E R L E S S O N S,

Appointed by the LITURGY of the
CHURCH of *ENGLAND*,
To be Read on SUNDAYS, and Chief FESTIVALS,
throughout the Year,

As they are directed by her Table of PROPER LESSONS.

To which are prefixed,

P R E F A C E S,
Pointing out the Design of the respective LESSONS.

Together with

Such REFLECTIONS on the several Passages contained
therein, as may serve to enforce the Duties and Doctrines
propounded to our Faith and Practice.

AND ALSO

Some EXPLANATORY NOTES.

The WHOLE

Intended for assisting the Judgment and Devotion of the serious
Members of our Church in Hearing and Reading the said Lessons.

By W I L L I A M W O G A N, Esq;
Late of EALING in Middlesex.

In F O U R V O L U M E S.

V O L. IV.

T H E S E C O N D E D I T I O N.

Hear the Church. Matt. xviii. 17.

Add to your faith virtue. 2 Pet. i. 5.

Cathedram habet in cælo, qui corda docet. AUGUST.

Est aliquid prodire tenus ——— HOR.

L O N D O N:

Printed for JOHN RIVINGTON, in St. Paul's Church-Yard,
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M.DCC.LXV.





PROPER LESSONS

Contained in the FOURTH VOLUME.

	Mor. Prayer.	Page.	Even. Prayer.	Page.
Seventh Sunday after Trinity	2 Sam. 21	1	2 Sam. 24	13
Eighth	1 Kings 13	23	1 Kings 17	41
Ninth	— 18	48	— 19	68
Tenth	— 21	83	— 22	96
Eleventh	2 Kings 5	104	2 Kings 9	122
Twelfth	— 10	131	— 18	142
Thirteenth	— 19	155	— 23	169
Fourteenth	Jerem. 5	182	Jerem. 22	200
Fifteenth	— 35	213	— 36	226
Sixteenth	Ezek. 2	237	Ezek. 13	250
Seventeenth	— 14	260	— 18	272
Eighteenth	— 20	291	— 24	311
Nineteenth	Daniel 3	321	Daniel 6	336
Twentieth	Joel 2	354	Micah 6	376
Twenty-first	Hab. 2	388	Prov. 1	404
Twenty-second	Prov. 2	427	— 3	438
Twenty-third	— 11	451	— 12	470
Twenty-fourth	— 13	487	— 14	504
Twenty-fifth	— 15	530	— 16	553
Twenty-sixth	— 17	568	— 19	580
Twenty-seventh	Isa. 65	600	Isa. 66	623



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

PROPER LESSONS

Contained in the Fourth Volume

Lesson	Page	Lesson	Page
Lesson 1	1	Lesson 11	11
Lesson 2	2	Lesson 12	12
Lesson 3	3	Lesson 13	13
Lesson 4	4	Lesson 14	14
Lesson 5	5	Lesson 15	15
Lesson 6	6	Lesson 16	16
Lesson 7	7	Lesson 17	17
Lesson 8	8	Lesson 18	18
Lesson 9	9	Lesson 19	19
Lesson 10	10	Lesson 20	20
Lesson 21	21	Lesson 22	22
Lesson 23	23	Lesson 24	24
Lesson 25	25	Lesson 25	25
Lesson 26	26	Lesson 26	26
Lesson 27	27	Lesson 27	27
Lesson 28	28	Lesson 28	28
Lesson 29	29	Lesson 29	29
Lesson 30	30	Lesson 30	30
Lesson 31	31	Lesson 31	31
Lesson 32	32	Lesson 32	32
Lesson 33	33	Lesson 33	33
Lesson 34	34	Lesson 34	34
Lesson 35	35	Lesson 35	35
Lesson 36	36	Lesson 36	36
Lesson 37	37	Lesson 37	37
Lesson 38	38	Lesson 38	38
Lesson 39	39	Lesson 39	39
Lesson 40	40	Lesson 40	40
Lesson 41	41	Lesson 41	41
Lesson 42	42	Lesson 42	42
Lesson 43	43	Lesson 43	43
Lesson 44	44	Lesson 44	44
Lesson 45	45	Lesson 45	45
Lesson 46	46	Lesson 46	46
Lesson 47	47	Lesson 47	47
Lesson 48	48	Lesson 48	48
Lesson 49	49	Lesson 49	49
Lesson 50	50	Lesson 50	50





A N
E S S A Y
O N T H E
P R O P E R L E S S O N S.

The Seventh SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lessons for { M. P. 2 SAM. Chap. xxi.
E. P. ——— Chap. xxiv.

P R E F A C E.

TH E first of these Lessons contains many useful instructions.

First, We see that wicked parents entail a curse on their children.—Thus the cruelty and bloodshed of Saul was visited on his posterity.

Secondly, That treaties and alliances, confirmed by solemn oaths, though of many years standing; yea, although at first indirectly obtained, or by surprize; yet ought they, by no means, to be infringed^a.

Thirdly,

^a Note, Were this enough considered, no man would meddle with Church-lands, or impropriate tythes, because of the oath of
V O L. IV. B God,

Thirdly, That no pretence of zeal for the Church, nor any other good end, may dissolve the obligations of justice, or of charity, towards those, who happen to differ from us in religious opinions, or modes of worship; much less will it justify any breach of the laws of nature and nations, or the violation of solemn compacts, mutually entered into and confirmed by oath.—This we learn from the example and penal effects of Saul's fiery zeal against the Gibeonites, in favour of the children of Israel; and are therefore taught, what judgment we are to make of the like doctrine and practice of those, who maintain, "That no faith is to be kept with Protestants; and that it is lawful, yea, meritorious, to extirpate such as they are pleased to call heretics."—The vengeance which pursued Saul and his posterity for the like practice, shews likewise the folly, as well as guilt, of those who think they may "do evil, that good may come."

Fourthly, We may observe, that the public crimes of princes, and chief governors of a state, especially the shedding of innocent blood, become national, and derive a guilt upon the whole community. How necessary therefore is it, that all subjects, who have any love or regard for the good of their country, should refrain from being the agents, or instruments, of a prince's impious or illegal will, lest they partake in his guilt and punishment.—In such a case a passive, rather than an active, obedience is to be paid to all iniquitous commands.

The extraordinary mourning of Rizpah for her children; the pious regards she shewed them after their decease, and her watchful care to secure their bodies from the beasts of the field, and fowls of the air, is an exemplary instance both of maternal affection, and of piety towards the dead. To this the Holy Ghost is pleased to do honour, by recording this action of Rizpah's, as a good work, and a thing acceptable to God. To confirm

God, and the dreadful imprecations wherewith they were generally dedicated by the donors. See Hooker, book 5th, of oblations, endowments, &c. p. 351, 355, &c. Spelman's history and fate of sacrilege.

us in this sentiment, the like generous respect of Mary, towards our blessed Lord, in pouring on his head the box of spikenard very precious, for his burial, is transmitted to posterity, where-ever the gospel is preached; both as a memorial of her, and a pattern to us. See Mark xiv. 9.

The sorrow of Rizpah is likewise an emblematical figure of that intense sorrow, and deep mourning, expressed by the Church (the primitive^b especially) on the cutting off any of her children by a judicial sentence, from her communion; on which occasion it was a customary solemnity, to put on mourning habits, and to bewail them as persons dead^c. This pious concern for persons excommunicated, is, by St. Paul, called mourning more than once, and thus described by him, 2 Cor. vii. 11. "This self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought! &c."

The motive, or principle, whence this holy concern springs, being a sincere charity, a pious sympathy, a tender and affectionate benevolence, is a virtue highly pleasing to God, a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, and therefore a most worthy pattern for our imitation.

The Church's faithful care, and conservation, of the bodies of her children after their natural decease, in her repositories provided for that use (which are therefore called Coemeteries^d; i. e. sleeping places, where they may rest till the last day), is also represented to us, in the example of Rizpah.

And David's piety, in bestowing a grave on Saul and his children, was not only an humane action, a charity and honour paid to the dead; but was highly ennobled by that generosity which appeared in it, towards one, who in life, had been his bitter and implacable enemy.—It warns us also, not to extend our resentments beyond the grave.

^b See Hammond note on 1 Cor. v. 2.
faith Orig. cont. Celsus, l. 3.

^c ὡς νεκρῶς πενθεῖσθαι,

^d Κοιμητήρια.

The Seventh SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

2 SAM. Chap. xxi.

Saul's cruelty to the Gibeonites is punished by a public judgment, and expiated by the death of seven of his sons.—Rizpah's kindness to the dead.—David burieth the bones of Saul and Jonathan.—The three years famine ceaseth, and God is intreated for the land.—David's wars with the Philistines; their giants slain in sundry battles.

1. **T**HEN there was a famine in the days of David, three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

THOUGH private sufferings are not always marks of divine judgment, and the displeasure of heaven; yet we may profitably believe, that public judgments are the scourges of heaven for public crimes: That we are therefore not to ascribe them to second causes, much less to chance, but to the immediate hand of God.—David himself (though a prophet) saw not the cause of the famine, till he inquired of God; nor was the punishment removed, till this was known, and due satisfaction made.—David might think his own sin, in rebelling against God, in the case of Uriah, or his people's crime in rebelling against himself, might have drawn down this severe judgment; and therefore enquires not the first or second years.—No doubt but private and public intercessions had been made for averting God's anger; but when these
availed

availed not, the pious king applies the third year to inquire of the Lord, what might be the cause of so heavy, and so continued a visitation.—This teaches us, that in all calamities, public and private, we should not only look up to God for help, but judge and examine ourselves; that we should consider our ways, and search out the particular sin, which may have provoked his wrath and indignation against us; first, reform it in ourselves; and then, as far as in us lies, in others. “Let every man examine himself” (saith the Apostle); for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”—How sacred the obligations of public oaths are, hath been elsewhere^f observed, and how dangerous the violation of them;—not only *Saul* and his house, but every age, affording examples of divine vengeance, for the like contempt of religious sanctions, though bound on the conscience of posterity, by the most solemn ties of oaths and imprecations. This, I say, hath been observed, and cannot be remarked too often, because it is one of those national sins, which is the most of all crying, yet the least likely to be reformed.—There is another part of *Saul*’s character, which well deserves our notice; and that is, the strange irregular temper of that unhappy prince: He destroys the innocent, and spares the guilty; through excess of zeal he exterminates those he was obliged, by the oath of God, to protect; and, for want of zeal, he shews mercy to *Amalekites*, whom God had commanded him to destroy.—But how faulty soever, and strange, this may seem in him, the case is too common amongst us all.—How apt are we to gratify our passions, at the expence of our duty! How earnest to serve the world, our lusts, or our interests; but how cold, languid, and partial,

^f 1 Cor. xi.^f See the Preface, &c.

6 The Seventh SUNDAY 2 Sam. 21.

in obeying the most positive commands of God!—How often do we sacrifice the *Gibeonites*, and spare *Amalek*! How often shew more favour to the enemies, than the friends of God!—How apt to be merciful, where we should be severe, and severe and cruel, when we ought to be merciful!—A conduct and spirit, from which the more serious professors of religion are not wholly free.

2. *And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites, and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them, in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah)*

injury done to the poor despised *Gibeonites*. Public good was the pretence, and religion the cloak: But let all statesmen know, who imitate *Saul* in such worldly maxims, and violate religion for the good of the state, that they are to expect the same fruit of their wicked policy, even the reverse of what their impious schemes pursue; to wit, distress and misery on the public; destruction and unhappiness on themselves.

3. *Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?*

name the satisfaction they required. In all cases of

Note here the awful and inviolable nature of divine justice! Satisfaction must be made for every wrong done; and that without respect of persons. No regard is had to the greatness, or meanness, of the parties concerned: Even the *Israelites*, the chosen people of God, yea, the chief head, the king of that people, must make reparation for the injury done to the poor despised *Gibeonites*. Public good was the pretence, and religion the cloak: But let all statesmen know, who imitate *Saul* in such worldly maxims, and violate religion for the good of the state, that they are to expect the same fruit of their wicked policy, even the reverse of what their impious schemes pursue; to wit, distress and misery on the public; destruction and unhappiness on themselves.

Druid, though a king, does not take upon him to dictate to them the nature, or degree, of recompence which should be made them for the injury received; but leaves it to themselves to make their demand, and

oppression, where no certain estimate of the damage can be had, this example of *David* is much the safest way of making a proper and adequate reparation.—Without restitution, divine justice will not acquit the offender; and no man is to be judge in his own cause. To take, therefore, our terms of reconciliation rather from the persons we have injured, than from our own opinion, is most agreeable to the wisdom from above; and to comply therewith, is the surest way of appeasing the wrath of heaven, as well as pacifying our offended brother, and turning his complaints into blessings and good-will.

4. *And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house, neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What you shall say, that will I do for you.*

5. *And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel;*

6. *Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give them.*

The *Gibeonites* seem to have been truly proselyted to the Jewish religion (they are called *Nethenim* in *Ezra vii. 7.*): therefore *Saul's* crime was the greater, in seeking to destroy them. Again, the modesty expressed in their demand [*no silver or gold, nor any man's life*] shews them to have been a virtuous and modest people. Neither do we read, that they ever attempted to resist, or rebel against *Saul*, for his oppression of them; nor yet applied to *David* for revenge. Even the atonement, now to be made, is required with a seeming unwillingness; *David* putting the question again and again to them, what satisfaction

they demanded. And they seeing it was the will of heaven, that *Saul's* house should suffer for his bloody persecution of them, and the law of God requiring blood for blood, they rightly concluded, that the

proper atonement for such a crime, would be the life of some of his family, rather than *silver* or *gold*. And even herein they ask not for the death of all his children and descendants, but only a certain number of them, and leave the choice to the king.—Which is an example of moderation, plainly teaching us not to be exorbitant or unreasonable in our demands of justice from our offending brethren; nor even too forward to take the satisfaction that is lawful and allowed.—As to *hanging up* the seven sons of *Saul*, 'tis most likely the *Gibeonites* were directed herein, or influenced, by God himself, “that so these sufferers, being thus publicly exposed to the view of all that passed by, the displeasure of God against truce-breakers and tyrants might be the more conspicuous and remarkable;” “That all might see, and fear, and do no more so wickedly:”—“That this public execution might the more signally vindicate the honour of God, both as avenger of perjury, and protector of those who embrace his true religion:” And, lastly, “That neither his own people might ever presume to violate the sacred bonds of oaths, nor unbelievers be discouraged from embracing the faith.”

7. *But the king spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.*

Nor is an oath only, but friendship also, to be held sacred and inviolable. Both these bands ensured the life of *Mephibosheth*.—*David* had too much piety, as well as sincere affection for his friend's family, not to spare the son of his beloved *Jonathan*.—

Thus the friendship of good men is continued beyond the grave; and the virtues of a righteous parent prove oftentimes a defence to his children, even after death: And may we not here add, that *David* makes *Mephibosheth* more than amends, for restoring him but to half his estate? ch. xix.

Michal

8. But the king took the two sons of Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth, and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite.

9. And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley-harvest.

end to the famine. Nevertheless, their hanging night and day, was contrary to the letter of the law (Deut. xxi. ver. 22, 23.): But this case was extraordinary, and the execution wholly committed to the Gibeonites, who might not be bound by that law.—The reason of this kind of death, and their hanging up so long, hath been remarked before; but we may further observe a special retribution of divine justice, in retaliating on Saul's posterity the measure he meted to others.—He had deprived the Gibeonites of the benefit of the laws for their protection; his children are deprived of the same benefit in their death.

10. And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered nei-

Michal had no children of her own, being cursed with barrenness for her contempt of David's pious humility, ch. vi. 23. but she brought up these children of her sister Merab as her own; her sister probably being dead (see Patrick). Yet even these are taken from her.—So dangerous is it to despise religion!—The time of their hanging, some think, was six months; but we are sure it was, till water dropped upon them out of heaven; that is, until God was pleased to send rain, and shew himself appeased, by putting an

Rizpah is a remarkable instance of maternal affection; her love to her children continues the same, even after death.—Their bodies, which are now no more than the miserable remains of a shameful death, yet are guarded with

ther the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.

11. *And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah the concubine of Saul had done.*

with the same watchfulness and care, as she had expressed towards them in life. How well were it, if Christian mothers would imitate the example!—That they would do that for their living children, which she did for her dead! That they would watch *night and day* to guard those rich treasures, which God hath committed to their care, their childrens souls! That, while they wait for the dropping of the rain on them out of heaven (I mean the divine grace), they would neither suffer *the birds of the air*, that is, the vanity and ambition of this world, to rest on them by day; nor *the beasts of the field*, that is, carnal lusts, and brutish passions, to destroy them *by night*; *i. e.* through ignorance, and want of instruction, and a virtuous education!

12. *And David went and took the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan his son, from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen them from the street of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa.*

13. *And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged.*

14. *And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son, buried they in the country of*

When *David* heard of the pious respects of *Rizpah* towards the dead, he was not only pleased with the action, but thought it an example worthy of imitation. Therefore he gave directions for taking the bones of *Saul* and *Jonathan*, as well as the bones of them that were hanged, and burying them in the sepulchre of their ancestors:—And by the immediate remark which follows, that, *after this, God was entreated for the land*, it seems plainly intimated to us, that God approved these honours which were done to the dead: That therefore the

Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father; and they performed all that the king commanded: and after that, God was entreated for the land.

Joseph, and others, that to be buried near our friends, yea, to be decently buried, is a thing lawfully desirable; and that an honourable interment is a real act of kindness to the dead, and highly acceptable to God.

15. *Moreover, the Philistines had yet war again with Israel, and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines; and David waxed faint.*

16. *And Ishbi-benob, which was of the sons of the giant, (the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight), he being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David.*

17. *But Abishai the son of Zeruiab succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.*

the place and manner of our burial is not so wholly indifferent, as our modern Sceptics pretend. The light of grace, as well as nature, shews, in this instance, and likewise in that of *Jacob*,

Joseph, and others, that to be buried near our friends, yea, to be decently buried, is a thing lawfully desirable; and that an honourable interment is a real act of kindness to the dead, and highly acceptable to God.

David, though now above sixty years old, still keeps his courage, and declines no danger in defence of his people; but leads out his army in person, and fights their battles. The moral of this history sets a precedent to all pastors, all governors and heads of families, to go before, and set the like good example to those who are under their charge: But, besides this, there is also a mystical and spiritual sense, which every Christian is concerned in.—

These wars of *David*, and combating with giants in his old age, warns us to expect continual battles with our spiritual enemies, while we are in this world; yea, more dangerous ones, when grown old, than in our youth. For, though in youth, when we

first engage in this warfare, we may prevail against *Goliath*,

Goliath, there will still remain more of the *sons of the giant*; an *Ishbi-benob* of the same race will arise, and set upon us to slay us, when we *wax faint*, with age and infirmities.——'Tis then a time therefore, rather to retire from temptations, than adventure beyond our strength, lest, by too great forwardness, we *quench the light of our Israel*; that is, lest we forfeit the reward, and fully the brightness, of our former success, and good example.——The people's advice to *David*, to go no more out with them to battle, was no less wise, than affectionate and kind: And happy were it for all persons in years, to make a timely retreat from the world; to lay aside their struggles and cares about all temporal affairs; not to think of fighting *giants*, when they are old; but to secure only that whereunto they have already attained; and so to have done with this world, as to make sure of heaven.

The victories over the sons of the giant, by *David's men*, is typical of the conquests of Christians over their spiritual enemies: Christ slays *Goliath*; his followers, and faithful *servants*, destroy the brethren of the giant.

18. *And it came to pass, after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant.*

19. *And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weavers beam.*

20. *And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of great stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four-and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant.*

21. *And when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea the brother of David slew him.*

22. *These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.*



The Seventh SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

2 SAM. Chap. xxiv.

P R E F A C E.

ON a motion of pride and vanity, David causes his people to be numbered.—God is displeased and sends a pestilence; which, in three days time, swept away seventy thousand of his subjects.—Here then we see another lapse of David, to warn us once more of the very great infirmity of human nature, even in the best of men: That man, how righteous soever he may be, is still but man; continually exposed to fresh temptations, and new falls.

Before, he was tempted by his lust, and fell into the grievous sins of adultery and murder. But that temptation was from the flesh, from a vicious and corrupted nature, and common to man; yet (as Nathan represented it) was but a traveller, that is, a stranger, to David; not an inmate, not a familiar bosom-friend; much less his Lord and Master.

The present temptation is from Satan; for he is the author of vanity and pride. And pride is a vice to be always feared, even by the most perfect, being a corruption of the mind which most intimately cleaves to man. It was the first that tainted the soul, and is the last that is subdued.—Let David's pride teach us humility.—When so
great

14 *The Seventh SUNDAY* 2 Sam. 24.

great a saint falls, well may we fear; and should never forget the Apostle's warning;—"Let him, that thinketh " he standeth, take heed lest he fall".

Seventh SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

2 SAM. Chap. xxiv.

1. *AND again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.*

2. *For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now, through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.*

HE moved David, &c.] that is, the devil tempted him. In 1 Chron. xxi. 1. he is called *Satan*, here he is called *the anger of the LORD*.—This adversary watches all opportunities to do us evil. If he observe God angry with us, he then takes occasion to tempt, as the most likely time to succeed. —He had tempted *David* before to the sin of lust; but *David* rose again from that sin, and recovered redoubled strength. He now tempts

him to the more secret and spiritual sin of pride.—*David* had repented, and hitherto submitted with admirable patience, and penitential humiliation, to the chastening of God's hand for his former fall; and might seem to grow more and more humble every day. And yet, in this very juncture it is, that he is lifted up with pride, and forgets himself; falling into such a blindness, as was plainly visible to others, but not to himself.—He might imagine, that, in desiring to know how the people of *Israel* were increased, he had in view the glory of God only, who was the

* 1 Cor. x. 12.

prime cause of such a blessing; while, at the same time, he sought chiefly his own.—Thus self-complacency fills us with a thousand illusions; insomuch that what we fancy we are offering up to God, as due to him, is only a sacrifice, which we offer to the idol of our own self-will and vanity.

3. *And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people (how many soever they be) an hundred-fold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?*

Though pride be so secret and imperceptible to ourselves, 'tis commonly very obvious to others. Even *Joab* sees it in *David*: A wicked man discerns it in a saint.—*Joab's* reproof was just, but not accepted; because he was an ill man. Advice from a wicked man, though never so good, loses its effect.—But it is pride that shuts our eyes to our faults, and our ears to the reproof of others: Yea, humility itself, if we have not a care, will betray us to pride: And this, of all kinds of pride, is the most dangerous, because the least suspected.

4. *Notwithstanding, the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host: and Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel.*

5. *And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Aroer, on the right side of the city that lieth in the midst of the river of Gad, and toward Jazer.*

6. *Then they came to Gilead, and to the land of*

Joab shews a good example in obeying the king's command, although he did not approve it.—Subjects and servants may modestly remonstrate against orders, which are liable to objection; but their dislike will not justify their disobedience. The king's command must always prevail, where-ever the subject-matter is in itself indifferent, and not plainly contrary to the Word of God. We see by this, that errors in government are sometimes from God, as a judgment

Tablim-hodshi; and they came to Dan-jaan, and about to Zidon;

7. *And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of Judah, even to Beer-sheba.*

8. *So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem, at the end of nine months and twenty days.*

9. *And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.*

10. *And Davids heart smote him, after that he had numbred the people: and David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.*

11. ^b *For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, Davids seer, saying,*

12. *Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose the one of them, that I may do it unto thee.*

13. *So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me.*

judgment on the people; therefore subjects are not to murmur, or censure such errors, much less rebel or resist. The best remedy for removing public grievances, is a public repentance:—Remove the cause, and the effect will cease of course.

There is not another instance in Scripture of man's being left to the choice of his own punishment: The man after God's own heart is the only one this singular favour is shewn to; and the divine condescension was not lost upon him, or abused. —God, who, through a cloud of human frailty, discerned the generous disposi-

^b *Heb. And.*

14. *And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD (for his mercies are great); and let me not fall into the hand of man.*

15. *So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel, from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beer-sheba, seventy thousand men.*

16. *And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing-place of Araunah the Jebusite.*

17. *And David spake unto the LORD, when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my fathers house.*

18. *And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD, in the*

tion of David's spirit and had so frequent experience, as it were, of the goodness of his heart, saw clearly that the indulgent offer might be safely made him. And what can give a brighter evidence to the sincerity of this great and holy man, in opposition to the spiteful and impious aspersions, which some men throw on his character, than this testimony that God could trust his soul; this confidence in David, that he would make a wise and pious choice? His frailty indeed appeared in his fall (and let him cast the first stone, that hath not fallen); but his repentance and humility, his benevolence and charity, derive a new lustre from his fall; and, from that cloud, break forth like the sun with greater splendor, and more distinguished rays. — This wise and good prince considered, That, in a *famine*, the misery falls heaviest on the common people, while the rich and the great escape: That, in *war*, princes are less exposed than their subjects; but that the pestilence respects not one more than another; the rich and the poor, the great and the small, being equally and alike exposed

threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

19. *And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded.*

20. *And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground.*

21. *And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshing-floor of thee to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people.*

22. *And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt-sacrifice, and threshing instruments, and other instruments of the oxen for wood.*

23. *All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king, and Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee.*

posed to the common danger. He, therefore, chooses this judgment, not as the least or lightest of the three, with respect to himself; but as, in all likelihood, most favourable to his people: A judgment, which, being immediately directed by the hand of a just God, might rather fall with less severity on the people, and the heavier on himself, as principal and sole offender.—How humble, how generous, and benevolent, a choice was this; and, therefore, how pious and wise! It disarmed the destroying angel; brought the Lord himself to repent, and stay his hand.—When we meekly submit ourselves to the divine correction, not only mercy, but justice itself, will say, *It is enough.*—And, O my soul, dost not thou, in this whole transaction, behold, as in a picture, the emblem and representation of the state of fallen man, and his redemption by Jesus Christ? The anger of God was kindled against man; the destroying angel was gone forth to cut us off by the sword of divine justice. But when it was stretched out upon *Jerusalem* (on the Church) to destroy it, then appeared the Son of God, and Son of David, to make intercession for us; and say to the avenger,

avenger, "Let thy hand be against me : Let me suffer instead of these sheep : Let all that they have done to offend, be laid on my head : Let me be the victim of divine vengeance ; but let these sheep be spared."—*David's* prayer and intercession for his people was, in truth, but the echo of *Christ's* mediation with his Father on behalf of his Church. And it was, in virtue thereof, that *Jerusalem*, which then was, obtained a gracious reprieve ; and the *Jerusalem*, which now is, is admitted to peace and salvation.

I will surely buy it of thee.]

24. *And the king said unto Araunah, Nay ; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price : neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the LORD my God, of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen, for fifty shekels of silver.*

25. *And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings : so the LORD, was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.*

It is too often the practice of some men, under pretext of religion, to make themselves masters of what belongs to others : But *David* will offer nothing to God, but what he could call his own ; he will not offer burnt-offerings to the Lord his God of that *which cost him nothing*.

—This should teach us, that the love of justice must ever accompany our works of charity towards men, and of piety towards God.—To be liberal, at the expence of another, is no better than robbery.—*David*, we see, would not accept what was freely

given, for even the service of God ; how much less ought we to take by violence, or fraud, the goods of another to our own use !

On the history of *David's* life, a pious and attentive reader cannot but observe and confess, that it is the work of Heaven : It contains a treasure of divine instructions, worthy that blessed Spirit, by whom it is recorded. We herein see, not only an admirable pattern of obedience ; but, at the same time, the natural

tural frailty of man, as well as the goodness and mercy of God, are represented to us in a most lively and affecting manner.—We cannot but observe in *David* such virtues, as may well be called miracles of grace.—He conquers a giant, yet continues humble: He is persecuted with the greatest inveteracy, yet retains his charity: He suffers innumerable afflictions, yet keeps his patience: He mounts a throne, yet loses not his virtue: A crown had no power to lessen his moderation: The scepter makes him not forget his crook; nor prosperity, the great adversities he had undergone.

And yet after all, when temptation comes, and God thought fit to leave him to himself, all these extraordinary virtues disappear at once; and we see nothing but man: The great saint is turned at once into a great sinner. Nevertheless, no sooner is his heart touched with a sense of his sin, but we behold him arise again from his fall in a more admirable manner, and his virtues shine out with more advantage and brightness, than if he never had transgressed.

As then the Christian life (according to St. *Augustine*) is nothing else but a continual exercise of humility, we find in the history of *David*, not only the most illustrious example of piety, but one of the most useful lessons we any where meet with in Scripture for inculcating this important truth; to wit, That “man
“is nothing of himself:” “That GOD is all.”—
“That, in the greatest saints, there is a remainder of
“corruption, a latent propensity to sin, which dwells
“in the flesh; and that a conscious sense of this should
“ever oblige us, while we are in this mortal body, to
“keep our ears and mouths shut to our own praises,
“and open only to the praises and glory of God.”

In this chapter there are two or three seeming contradictions, which require reconciling. First. It is said, Ver. 1. *He* [the LORD] *moved David*, &c.; but, in 1 *Chron.* xxi. 1. where the same history is related, 'tis said, SATAN *stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel*. This may be solved two ways; either taking the

the anger, or fury, of the Lord, here in our Lesson, to signify the same as Satan does in *Chron.*; and then the verb *, which is the same in both places, will have the same nominative (tho' in one place not expressed; scil. *Seducitor seduxit*; according to the rule of *Junius* and *Tremellius*, "Nomina conjugata, verbis suis; ut contra, verba nominibus inclusa latent, ex linguae proprietate, ut Gen. xviii. 21.;" *vid. not. in locum*:—Or, Secondly, If we consider the two principles of good and evil; namely, GOD, as Author of the first; Satan, of the other; we may observe, there are actions, both good and evil in themselves, as well as indifferent, which God and Satan may incite men to; but in a different manner, and to a different end;] even as different as the principle from whence the action flows. If God move to evil (as he tempted *Abraham*) it is to try and improve our virtue: If the devil move us, even to good (as to alms deeds, zeal, &c. it is to ensnare us into pride, bitterness, &c.) Hence it appears, that it is not always in our power to distinguish the principle, which moves us to action; but it is ever in our power, through God's grace, to direct it to a right end, the glory of God, and the salvation of our own and others souls:—In a word, it is God that leads us to be tempted of the devil, as he did Christ, *Matt. iii.*; but God himself tempteth no man (according to St. *James's* sense) to do evil; but, that he may bring good out of evil.

2. The next difficulty is to reconcile the difference, as to the number of the people given in here, and in *Chron.* Here they are said to be 800,000 of *Israel*, and 500,000 of *Judah*: Whereas in *Chron.* the account is 1,100,000 of *Israel*, and 470,000 of *Judah*.—The difference of the two accounts is great; but the consequence is not great.—Nevertheless, in honour of God's word, many solutions are offered.—If we observe what is said, 1 *Chron.* xxvii. 24. and chap. xxi. 6. that the tribes of *Benjamin* and *Levi* were not numbered, it shews how such a difference might probably happen.—Others were employed, as well as *JOAB*, in taking the numbers: He, as captain-general, delivered in one account; and they another. The veracity of the Scripture is not concerned in the truth or falsehood of the numbers returned; but in relating (as, no doubt, it truly doth) that such and such returns were made. And we may piously presume, that the difference in the numbers, though seemingly accidental, or through some mistake, happened by the overruling disposal of Providence; not only, through the uncertainty of the returns, to punish the vain curiosity of *David*; but in consequence of that divine promise made to *Abraham*; That "his seed should be as the stars for multitude, which NO MAN CAN NUMBER †." According also, to that saying which God put in the mouth of *Balaam*; "Who can count the dust of *Jacob*, and "the number of the fourth part of *Israel* ‡?" Hence, we may well conceive, arose the uncertainty, and confused account of the num-

* *Jafeth, moved.* † *Gen. xv. 5.* ‡ *Numb. xxiii. 10.*

22 *The Seventh SUNDAY, &c.* 2 Sam. 24.

bers returned. And, it is natural to suppose, that *Joab* declined being very exact in taking, or delivering in, the returns; because, as it is said in *Chron.* *The king's word was abominable to Joab.* And, who knows, but this confusion and uncertainty was the very thing that opened *David's* eyes to see his folly, and made his heart to smite him.

Here likewise it seems necessary to add, That, upon numbering the people at any time, every man was, by the law, to pay a ransom for his soul; that so *the plague should not break forth upon them*; see *Exod.* xxx. 12. This ransom, which, without respect of persons, was the same to all (ver. 14.), was called the *atonement-money*, and dedicated to the service of the tabernacle (ver. 16.) The omission of requiring this atonement-money, on his numbering the people, was an high aggravation of *David's* sin. See *Dr. Grew Cosm. Sacra*, p. 273; and *Dr. Delany* in *Life of David*.

3. A third difficulty arises from the difference in the price, which was paid *Araunab* for his floor and oxen. In our Lesson it is said to be fifty shekels of silver; which, at 1 s. 3 d. each, makes but 3 l. 2 s. 6 d.: But in *Chron.* 'tis called 600 shekels of gold, which comes to 450 l. Expositors reconcile these two places thus:—The latter sum was given for the ground; the other, only for the floor and oxen. See also *Dr. Delany*.





The Eighth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lessons for { M. P. 1 Kings, Chap. xiii.
E. P. ——— Chap. xvii.

P R E F A C E.

IN the former part of chap. xiii. we are taught many instructive Lessons concerning the nature and pernicious effects of schism.

1. To shew how very heinous and detestable the guilt of schism is, God not only sends his prophet to Bethel, to denounce his judgment and displeasure against the schismatical and false worship of the ten tribes, but forbids him so much as to eat or drink with that people; or even to accept the seemingly innocent accommodation of returning home by the same road that he went.—By this severe interdiction, we may presume, is meant, that we ought, as far as in us lies, to avoid the society and conversation of those, who have renounced communion with the Church: —With such no not to eat; much less to walk in their ways, and follow their examples.

2. Secondly, We are taught the fatal consequence of separation from the true Church. As such separation is founded in the breach of charity with our brethren, so it generally terminates in a defection from God, by heresy, idolatry, or atheism. It first destroys love; then, faith

and piety. In a word, it renders all acts of religion and faith useless and unprofitable^a.

Jeroboam first rebels against his king; then forsakes his God. His revolt from the house of David tempts him to divide also from the Church of Jerusalem: And his impious policy proceeds to establish idolatry by law, as a necessary expedient for securing his new acquisition, and ill-gotten power.

Thus irreligious princes do often prefer reasons of state to the concerns of religion:

Thus prejudice and pride is the first step to schism; and worldly interests confirm and establish it.

3. We may likewise observe in the character of Jeroboam, that men of proud hearts, although they smart under the visible tokens of God's displeasure, yet have not grace to repent, and to forsake the sin that has provoked him to punish them.—Jeroboam felt both the wrath and the goodness of God, in the withering, and then restoring, his arm: He had gratitude enough to offer the prophet a reward for the mercy received, yet still persisted in his sin; still remained ungrateful to that God, whose favour had raised him to a throne, whose vengeance he had sensibly experienced, and whose mercy he had so undeservedly obtained.

4. The rending of the altar, and pouring off the ashes, may admonish us, that God will not accept such sacrifices as are offered by schismatical hands. The rent^b was a significant emblem both of their sin, and of their punishment.

5. The prophecy against the altar, and its completion, about three hundred years after, in the person of Josiah, seems to intimate, that although schism and heresy may prevail for a time in the Church of God, thro' the encouragement or connivance of evil princes, and corrupt magistrates, yet shall it, at length, be brought to an end;

^a See 1 Cor. xiii.

^b Σχισμα, a rent, a division. Hence our English word Schism is formed.

either by a reformation, or else the destruction of its abettors. Our Lord hath also declared the same: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up^c." The tares are indeed suffered for a time to grow in the field of the Church; but when the day of harvest comes, then shall they be separated from the good corn, and burnt.

6. We see the danger of putting forth our hands against the ministers and messengers of God; of whom he has said, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm^d."——Their persons, as well as office, are sacred; and the hand of the mightiest king, when stretched out to fight against God and his Church, shall be blasted, and wither.

II. The second part of this Lesson, wherein is related the faulty conduct, and unhappy fate, of the prophet, who was disobedient to the word of the Lord, affords also many useful instructions.

1st, That no man, especially the minister of God, should presume to dispense with any part of the positive institutions of God and his Church; much less allow himself in a plain breach of his commandments (or the moral law), on any pretence whatsoever.

2dly, It teaches us the great folly and danger of a partial obedience. To execute one part of our duty strenuously and well, and to fail in another, which is equally binding and necessary, is but undoing what we had done; and thereby becoming guilty of the whole law^e, by thus wilfully offending in one material point.

3dly, Some of the Fathers conceive it probable, that this man of God had entertained a secret pride, and too great self complacency, in the great things he had done; and possibly neglected to give the whole glory to God; and that this provoked the Lord to withdraw his grace, and to suffer him to fall.

^c Matt. xv. 13.

^d Ps. cv.

^e Jam. ii. 10.

4thly, Another reason may also be assigned of his fall; to wit, self-indulgence, and yielding too much to the cravings of his bodily appetite. This lusting of the flesh against the spirit, though of a less malignant nature than pride, is yet the common and most prevailing temptation to disobedience, or failure in matter of duty; especially with respect to those duties, which are chiefly founded on the positive institutions of religion; and in such cases, as was this of our prophet.—To be sent a long journey without the least refreshment; nay, to be charged not so much as to taste a morsel of bread, or draught of water, must needs seem, to flesh and blood, a very hard saying: *Who can bear it?*—The prophet, we see, had the courage to risque his life, in delivering a displeasing message to a wicked king; had virtue enough to resist the offer of a royal reward, and yet wanted strength of resolution to withstand the solicitations of his own flesh.—This shews how much easier it is to overcome the world and the devil, than to subdue the body, and to bring it into subjection.—We cannot well suppose he would so readily have yielded to the invitation of a stranger, had there not been a strong party in his own breast to second the temptation. Had the old prophet's story been as true as he pretended, yea, had an angel from heaven brought him such a contradictory message, he could hardly have been induced to believe and obey it, except his own lust, and carnal desire, had first imposed upon him, and obscured his faith. The aggravation of his crime is therefore very emphatically expressed by the old prophet, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the MOUTH of the Lord; that is, hast disobeyed the positive command of God; a command delivered by his own mouth, &c.

This left him, and all such as fall into the like act of disobedience, without excuse. And who can expect impunity in such a case, when he sees that God spared not his own servant, his own prophet, for transgressing a positive and express command?—Yet who is there (and I may appeal to the most serious professors of religion) that finds

finds not more difficulty in observing, with due strictness, some of the minute offices of positive duty (at their tables,——in the Church, or in their families), than they do in greater matters?—They that keep a narrow watch over their hearts and actions, will, too often, find this to be very true.——It likewise suggests to us another truth, which deeply concerns us all, That no man can be seduced into error, or any neglect of duty, but by himself, and through his own fault. No one would fall from the true faith, or the unity of the Church, did not some secret deceit of self-love, or a false heart, betray him.—'Tis our own lust, as St. James^f assures us, that deceives us, and not another.

'Tis also much to be noted, how great the guilt, and how fatal the effect, of lying is.—Not only the command of God is here violated by a bold lye; but the life of one prophet is destroyed by its means, and the souls of both the deceiver and deceived are exposed to the danger of eternal death;——of the one, for his lye; of the other, for believing it.——This shews the great reason our Lord had for joining the liar and the murderer in the character of the devil, John viii. 44. Satan's lye betrayed all mankind to death, as the old prophet's did his too credulous brother.—This latter indeed had not the same malice, yet it had the same unhappy effect; even the death of him that was deceived thereby!

^f Chap. i. 14.

The Eighth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

1 KINGS, Chap. xiii.

Schism from the true Church is punished, even in a king; and partial obedience, even in a true prophet.

1. *AND behold, there came a man of God out of Judah, by the Word of the LORD unto Beth-el: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.*

SCHISM ever borders upon apostasy:—Jeroboam first leaves the true Church, and then the true God; first he turns separatist, next idolater; yet God sends a prophet to reclaim.—God does not immediately forsake those that forsake him; but long affords the means and opportunities of grace:—He sends his prophets; calls often to repentance; and, by his ministers, intreats and beseeches us to be reconciled^f.

2. *And he cried against the altar in the Word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD, Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and mens*

Stones are less obdurate than a proud sinner's heart! The prophet therefore addresses his divine message to the altar, rather than to him that was offering thereon. We do not find that the king, and his idolatrous congregation, were moved at the thunder of God's vengeance; but the stones

^f 2 Cor. v. 20.

bones shall be burnt upon thee.

3. And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.

4. And it came to pass when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Beth-el, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.

5. The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar ^g, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the Word of the LORD.

hear and obey the will of Heaven: The altar was rent; but we hear not of one heart that rent at the message, or the miracle.—No sin obdures more than schism. The very stones cried out against these separatists, for their defection from God's Church; but they remained insensible.

So far from repentance was he that made Israel to sin, that his pride and resentment overcame all conviction of conscience, and all fear of God's judgments: He rather meditates war against Heaven, and presumes to lift up his hand against that God, who had given him his being and his crown. But his impiety and ingratitude, his folly and madness, is rebuked by the withering of his hand.—A gentle, but significant, reproof! to convince the proudest sinner of God's power, and his own weak-

ness.—Did ever any contend with God, and prosper? The same Almighty power might have blasted him quite, and withered him up to the root, as it afterwards did the barren fig-tree ^h: But man he first admonishes, before he strikes:—He is patient, as well

^g A significant emblem that God accepts not any devotions that are offered up contrary to the orders and constitutions of his own Church.

^h Matt. xxi. 19.

as righteous and strong: He corrects, but with judgment.

6. *And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before.*

Lord our God; therefore the king said not unto the prophet, *Intreat my, but thy God.* It is plain he believed him to be the true God; but he owned him not for *his*.—Thus his hand is amended, his soul is not: This continued still dry, still inflexible, and stretched out against God.—In the prophet's ready intercession for him, we see the benign temper and spirit of a true *man of God*; and how very different it is from that of the wicked, or the men of the world. A good man is kinder to his enemy, than ill men are to their friends. He prays for his persecutor, and *intreats* for the hand that was stretched out for his ruin. In a word, a good man is like his Master; merciful, as he is merciful: He hates no enemies, but those of his soul; he fears no power, but that of God.—He pities, rather than resents, the ill usage of men; and sees no danger, while God is on his side.

7. *And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward.*

This wicked prince is compelled to own the power of God, and to sue for his mercy; yet too proud to give glory to either. He feels the stroke of God's justice, yet will not submit; he receives the favour he petitioned for, yet will not be thankful. His faith is that of devils; he believes, and trembles.—None but a true and saving faith can call the

Tho' *Jeroboam* is unthankful to the author of his recovery, he is thankful to the instrument. He now kindly invites, whom before he had threatned; offers him a gift, whom

whom he had endeavoured to punish. Thus none are so bad, but are sensible of bodily favours; but if you offer to cure their souls, 'tis counted an unpardonable injury. Civil respects do often consist with want of grace; and many a one is liberal of his purse and good words, who is niggardly of his duty and obedience to God.—Possibly this evil prince might hope to pacify the anger of God by the civilities he paid to his messenger.—Thus wicked men think God and his ministers to be such as themselves; that they are to be won with gifts, and appeased with compliments, and fair speeches. It is still a practice too common among worldly men, to try, by caresses, to bribe the preachers of God's word to speak to them smooth things; to abate of the rigour of their doctrine, the menaces of judgment to come, &c.; to soothe them in their liberties, and flatter them in their crimes; “which say to the seers, See not, and to the prophets, Prophecy not to us right things; Speak unto us smooth things; prophecy deceits^h.” The answer to such we may find in the Gospel for this day, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my father, which is in heavenⁱ.”

8. *And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread, nor drink water, in this place:*

9. *For so was it charged me by the Word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor*

The true *man of God* has fortitude enough, when God commands, to reprove a great man in the midst of his grandeur, and to be biased neither by interest nor fears, threats or promises. Howbeit he forgets not good manners and respect.—Tho' he boldly cry out against the great man's altar, that is,

^h *If. xxx. 10.*

ⁱ *Matt. vii.*

turn again by the same way that thou camest.

10. *So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Beth-el.*

his favourite vice, yet he neglects not the honour due to his person and station. For so here our prophet is not rough and uncivil in his refusal of the king's favour, how unlawful soever for him

to accept; and tho' offered by a wicked man. He returns indeed a peremptory denial; but withal renders a good and sufficient reason why he could not comply; namely, "God had charged him to the contrary."—This is a Lesson to the clergy, that the minister of God is not to proceed on human and carnal motives, in the discharge of his function: He may not act, but by a Divine warrant: The will of God must ever be the rule of his conduct, and direct his most common actions. He is not, as other men are, at liberty to eat and drink, or to take presents; that is to say, to enter into familiarities, or accept obligations from the professed enemies of God and Religion.—"Do not I hate them that hate thee?" saith the man after God's own heart; "Yea, I hate them right fore, as tho' they were mine enemies^k." —This is not a want of charity, as the world may call it, but the loving and obeying of God, rather than man; yea, this holy hatred and austerity towards such men is the best sign, and purest act, of friendship and love; because the most likely means to work a reformation^l.

What

^k *Pf. cxxxix.*

^l It is evident enough, that the command of God, in relation to the prophet's not eating, &c. was to shew, that the *Israelites*, by their compliance with the king's command, had made themselves unworthy of any communication with the servants of the living God. And as to the not turning again *by the same way* that he came, it was a proverbial speech at that time, and in that country, *That a man went the same way he came*, when he failed of success in any undertaking. Wherefore, to shew that he had not failed in what he went about, but that all he had threatened, should surely come to

pass,

11. *Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el, and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Beth-el: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father.*

12. *And their father said unto them, What way went he? for his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah.*

13. *And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass, and he rode thereon,*

14. *And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak; and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that comest from Judah? And he said, I am.*

15. *Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread.*

16. *And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread, nor drink water, with thee in this place.*

17. *For it was said to me by the Word of the*

What shall we think of this *old prophet* that dwells at *Beth-el*, within the air of *Jeroboam's* idol; that lives where the man of God dares not eat?—If he was a prophet of God, why did he wink at the sin of *Jeroboam*? why did he not reprove him? what needed a seer to come out of *Judah* for the reproof of a sin that was acted under his nose? why did he suffer his family to be present at an idolatrous feast? why did he lye?—And yet, if he was not a prophet of God, how had he true visions? how had he true messages from God? Why did he confirm the menacing word of that prophet whom he seduced? Doubtless he was a prophet of God, but corrupt; held the truth, but in unrighteousness; had knowledge, but without zeal.—Prophecy (or the ministerial function) doth not necessarily infer sanctity.—Many a one hath had visions from God, who shall never behold the beatific presence of God. “Have we not prophesied in thy name?” will many wicked men plead

pass, the prophet was bid to return another way than that by which he came to *Beth-el*; which accordingly he did. *Campbell's Hist. of the Bib.* p. 338.

34 *The Eighth* SUNDAY 1 Kings 13.

LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread, nor drink water, there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest.

18. *He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art, and an angel spake unto me, by the Word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread, and drink water. But he lied unto him.*

19. *So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.*

at the last day ; but it shall not acquit them. A *Balaam*, a *Saul*, a *Caiaphas*, may prophesy, and yet have no grace. A little holiness is more worth than much illumination. The gifts of the Spirit, and the gift of the Spirit, are widely different, tho' so much alike both in sound and appearance : A man may have the first, and yet be quite destitute of the other. Which made *St. Paul* say, " Tho' I have the gift
" of prophecies, and under-
" stand all mysteries, and

" all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I
" could remove mountains, and have not charity,
" I am nothing ^m." We may indeed covet these extraordinary gifts, for the greater glory of God ; but the ordinary, *i. e.* his grace, or, as the apostle calls it, " The way of charity," excels them all ⁿ.

Whatever the old prophet's motive might be in fetching the other back, 'tis plain the semblance of piety deceived him. There is no temptation so dangerous as that which comes veiled under the mask of religion. *Jeroboam* threatens, but the prophet stands undaunted ; *Jeroboam* fawns and promises, the prophet holds constant : But an old grey-headed seer feigns a counter-message from God, and the prophet yields, and transgresses.—Thus Satan disguises his temptations, and hides his cloven foot ; he affrights not as a fiend, but seduces as an angel of light.—Carnal reason also might urge many plausible arguments ; and the flesh doubtless was not wanting to plead strongly her wants, pinching hunger, burning thirst,

^m 1 Cor. xiii.

ⁿ 1 Cor. xii. 31.

and extreme weariness. But no pretences can warrant the violation of a divine command.—A word from God is pleaded on both sides. But, in every contest between the flesh and the spirit, the safest and the surest way, is ever to take part against ourselves; and he can never err dangerously, who follows that command, which serves most to humble and mortify his corrupt nature: For this, infallibly, is the will of God, that we should “deny ourselves, and “take up the cross daily.”—An angel from Heaven, if he preach any other doctrine, is to be looked on as a deceiver. But God’s will is one, as his nature is: He cannot deceive, and will not be mocked.—But although the prophet was to blame, in that he rejected not the pretended revelation of another prophet, and for his disobedience was worthy of punishment, yet St. *Augustine* ° conceives, his sin was not damnable, being rather a sin of surprize, than of contumacy or malice.—But beware we of such mistaken obedience; especially in these perilous times, when so many counter-messages from God are brought us by lying prophets, and pretenders to the Spirit.

20. *And it came to pass as they sat at the table, that the Word of the LORD came unto the prophet that brought him back:*

21. *And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which*

Fatal welcome! deceitful meat! while the bread was yet in his mouth, he hears the sentence of death; while he is feeding his body, he is told of his carcase and sepulchre. And all this, for saving his life, as he imagined. And this sentence of death he hears from the very man who had tempted him to the sin.—We may wonder that God would inspire

° *Non sua contumacia spreverat præceptum Dei implere, sed aliena decipiente fallacia: Obedire se credidit, quando non obedivit.* See also this compared to the deception of Adam in Paradise. Dean Young’s sermons, vol. II. p. 20.

36 *The Eighth SUNDAY* I Kings 13.

the LORD thy God commanded thee,

22. *But camest back, and hast eaten bread, and drank water, in the place of the which the LORD did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.*

nions, as by fair speeches, and extraordinary civilities, tempt us to undue compliances, are often the first that turn our accusers.—'Tis certain this is the insidious conduct of *Satan*; he betrays us by false appearances into the commission of sin, and then is the first to accuse us to God.—Before commission, he palliates the action as necessary or innocent; afterwards, he aggravates the guilt as horrid, and unpardonable.—But neither the one nor the other is to be believed; because, as we said of the *old prophet*, *He lies unto us.*

23. *And it came to pass after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back.*

only to the outward man: The soul's interest, the true happiness of man, they have no concern or regard for at all.

24. *And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it,*

the author of the fault to pronounce the punishment.

But, as *St. Gregory* remarks, "It was agreeable to the order of Divine justice, that his servant should hear his doom from the mouth which had betrayed him."—In this also we may see the danger of worldly friendships: Such compa-

A poor amends for an irreparable injury! to betray his life by a lye, and then lend him his ass to ride on; to wrong his soul, and shew courtesy to his body! But this is the common way of the world; their respects are

The man of God returns alone, pensive, no doubt, for his offence, when a lion out of the wood meets him, and slays him.—O the just and awful judgments of the Almighty,

the lion also stood by the carcase.

25. And behold, men passed by, and saw the carcase cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcase: and they came and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt.

Almighty, who brought this fierce beast out of his wild ranges, to be the executioner of his offending servant!—Surely this prophet was a man of some virtue and piety, else he would not have carried a threatening message to that idolatrous king, nor so boldly reproved

him in the midst of his guards and attendants: And yet, for varying but from one circumstance of God's command, he is given for a prey to the lion. Learn we hence, that our interest in God is so far from excusing a wilful sin, that it aggravates it: And of all others the sin of a *prophet*, a professed minister of God, shall not pass unpunished.—We see too, the very wild beasts are led by a Providence; their wise and powerful Creator knows how to serve himself of them. The lions save one prophet (*Dan. vi. 22.*), and kill another, according to the commission received from their Maker.—What good man then need fear, that has God for his guard? What sinner can hope to escape unpunished, when every creature of God is ready to be an avenger of evil? The beasts of the field were made to serve us; we, to serve our Creator: But when we forsake our homage to him that made us, it is no marvel if the beasts forget their duty to us, and deal with us, not as masters, but as rebels.—*St. Augustine* indeed (as we before observed) made no doubt, but that this prophet died in the favour of God, tho' by the teeth of the lion. His death atoned for his fault; and the lion had no further power over his body, when satisfaction was made to the Divine justice.—We ought therefore to suspend our judgment in such cases: Violent deaths do not always argue the anger of God.—Even such a death is to his servants a fatherly castigation, a loving correction.

26. *And when the prophet that brought him back from the way, heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the Word of the LORD: therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the Word of the LORD, which he spake unto him.*

27. *And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled him.*

28. *And he went, and found his carcase cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcase: the lion had not eaten the carcase, nor torn the ass.*

29. *And the prophet took up the carcase of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn, and to bury him.*

30. *And he laid his carcase in his own grave, and they mourned over him, saying, Alas my brother.*

How unsearchable are the ways of the Almighty! The man of God sins, and dies speedily: The lying prophet that seduced him, survives. Nay, the wicked Jeroboam enjoys his idolatry, and treads on the grave of his reprover. — We may not judge then of God's favour by the delay of stripes, nor of his displeasure, by the haste. — Rather, whom God loves, he chastiseth, — sharply and speedily; while he permits the wicked to go on and prosper in their sins. — But how much happier is it even to die soon, that we may live for ever; than that we should live long, to die for ever? — Had the lion set upon the prophet for hunger, why did he not devour, as well as kill? Why did he not rather slay the beast than the man? since we are told, it is the nature of the lion, not to assail man, except in the want of other prey. Certainly the same power that employed those fangs, restrained them; that so the world might see, it was not appetite that provoked the beast to this violence, but the over-ruling command and providence of God. — Even so, O Lord, thy powerful hand is over that roaring lion, that goes about continually, seeking whom he may devour. Thine hand with holds him, that,

that, although he be suffered to shed the blood of thine elect, yet he cannot hurt their souls, nor utterly destroy their bodies. While he doth those things which thou permittest, in order to thy own wise and just ends, yet he cannot do lesser things, which he desires to do, but thou permittest not.

31. *And it came to pass after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones.*

32. *For the saying which he cried by the Word of the LORD against the altar in Bath-el, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.*

God, and to inter him in his own sepulchre; so much love, as to wish himself joined in death to that body, whose death he had procured.—Few men are so absolutely wicked, as not to shew some marks of grace, some tokens of humanity. But it is a cruel courtesy, to betray a man to death, and then to bedew him with tears! and yet how common! Do not fond parents so destroy, and then bewail, their children? Do not friends often kill with kindness, and then lament?—"The very mercies of the wicked are cruel."

33. *After this thing Jeroboam returned not from*

This old seducer hath yet so much truth as to make a right comment upon what had happened: He shews the danger of disobedience, and confirms the certainty of that judgment which his late guest had denounced against *Israel*. Thus it pleases the wisdom of God sometimes to express his will, and justify his proceedings, by the tongues of evil men.—We see also he had so much faith and courage, as to fetch the carcase from the lion; so much piety and compassion, as to weep for the man of

After so remarkable a vicissitude of judgment and mercy, who would not expect

40 The Eighth SUNDAY 1 Kings 13.

his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people, priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places.

34. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.

pect that Jeroboam should immediately turn penitent, and say, "Lord, thou hast stricken me in justice; thou hast healed me in mercy; I will provoke thee no more: This hand which thou hast restored, shall be consecrated to the service of thy true religion, in pulling down those abominations it hath set up." And yet we

find he goes on his old course, as if nothing had happened, and lives and dies a rank idolater.—No marble is so hard and insensible as a graceless heart: The interchanges of judgment and favour do but obdure it the more: Which made the prophet say, "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more^p."—How happy then, and merciful, are those temporal afflictions, which are sent to soften these hearts of ours, and at once assure us of our heavenly Father's love, and our own future bliss! But how terrible is that indulgence, which reprieves the sinner from the evils of this life, to plunge him the deeper in eternal misery!—The forest judgment in this world, is impunity in sin: It is a mark and earnest of reprobation.—"The very prosperity of fools shall destroy them," saith Solomon^q: But, "Thy loving correction shall make me great," saith David^r.—Correct us therefore, O Lord; but with judgment.—Let us have our punishment here; our evil things with Lazarus in our life-time; that, after death, our portion may be with him, that is, with thee, for ever.

^p *Isa.* i. 5.

^q *Prov.* i. 32.

^r *Psf.* xviii.



The Eighth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

I KINGS, Chap. xvii.

Elijah, whose history begins at this chapter, denounces a judgment of dearth, which should last three years and an half, and be attended with a grievous famine. He is sent to Cherith, and there fed by a raven; then to Zarephath, and there entertained by a widow woman. He increases her oil and meal, and raiseth her son to life.

1. *AND* Elijah the Teshbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

2. *And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,*

3. *Get thee hence, and turn thee east-ward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.*

After reading the whole chapter.

IN the character and conduct of *Elijah*, we behold a more perfect example of obedience, than what the Morning Lesson set before us.

The fidelity and courage of both prophets, in delivering their messages to the two idolatrous kings, was much the same; but the firmness of *Elijah's* faith and fortitude was the more remarkable, as his sufferings were more lasting,
and

42 *The Eighth* SUNDAY 1 Kings 17.

4. *And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.*

5. *So he went, and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherish, that is before Jordan.*

6. *And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening: and he drank of the brook.*

7. *And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.*

8. *And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,*

9. *Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.*

10. *So he arose, and went to Zarephath: and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.*

11. *And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me,*

and the danger he incurred both great and foreknown. For as *Ahab's* impiety exceeded that of *Jeroboam*, or any other of his predecessors, so was his resentment against God's prophet more inveterate. See ch. xviii. ver. 10.

Our morning prophet, after a short trial of imposed abstinence and self denial, yielded to the solicitation of the flesh, and fell into an act of disobedience, tho' expressly forewarned and forbidden of God. But *Elijah* consults not with flesh and blood, but commits himself wholly to Providence; retires where he was ordered, into a lonely desert; and lives solitary by the brook's side, until God commands his remove.

Thus the true Christian gives himself up to the conduct and appointments of the divine will; he retires from the world by a spiritual retreat, by an actual abrenunciation of the vain pomps, and empty enjoyments, of life; he lives out of the world, or rather, above it, while he is in it; according to that of the Apostle, "The time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they
" that

I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

12. *And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in, and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.*

13. *And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go, and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.*

14. *For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.*

15. *And she went, and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she and he, and her house, did eat many days.*

16. *And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.*

17. *And it came to pass,*

“that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.” 1 Cor. vii.

An holy indifference to the pleasures of sense, and a pious disregard to the things of the world, is the best kind of *ascetic* life, and the only course to secure us from being dejected by adversity, or corrupted by prosperity. —He is the only true hermit, that thus forsakes the world; and hath his conversation in heaven, while he lives upon earth.

From this spiritual recess from the world, Christians are also called the “secret ones of God;” and while they herein imitate this holy prophet (who is, by some, called the first founder^a of the eremitical, or monastic, life) they imitate him likewise in his dwelling and place of abode. They also dwell by the brook Cherith, which is before Jerdan; that is to say, they keep close to

^a See Annotation at the end.

44 The Eighth SUNDAY 1 Kings 17.

after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick, and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.

18. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

19. And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

20. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow, with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?

21. And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.

22. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.

23. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down

their vow in baptism, whereof Jordan is the noted emblem. — While they dwell here, and make their abode by the brook *Cherith* (whose literal interpretation [of *slaying*] may very aptly denote also, the salutary discipline of mortification and repentance), no powers of the world, no spiritual enemies, shall disturb their resting place, no ever prevail to hurt them. — The only secure state, in the Christian life, is that of mortification. — *Ahab* sought *Elijah* all the world over, but found him not: So, if we keep close to God, by a mortified and divine life, we cannot but be safe.

Many instructive lessons may be drawn from *Elijah's* being fed in his retirement, by the *ravens*. — If we serve him, who is the Lord of all created nature, we never shall want our daily food, while employed in his service. His clouds shall drop manna for us in the wilderness; or, the very birds of the air sustain us. — Why then should we be anxious for the necessities of life? Why should we take thought for the morrow? — His hand is not shortened: — “The earth
“ is

out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and *Elijah* said, See, thy son liveth.

24. And the woman said to *Elijah*, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

“ is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof.”

If, from hence, we pass to the mystical and more spiritual intent of this history, the fathers direct us to turn our faith to J E S U S C H R I S T, figured in the person of the prophet: In this type, we see him rejected by the *Jews*, and

driven from his own people, to the wilderness of the world. But here he is entertained by the *ravens*, a lively emblem of the *Gentile* church; black as the raven, by nature and sin, but made comely through grace (see *Cant.* i. 5.) “ The *Gentile* church, as *St. Augustine* speaks, was indeed like the raven, while it “ despised the living Lord; and, before grace received, “ took delight in dead carcases, even dumb idols.”

Another emblem of the *Gentile* church, is the widow of *Zarephath*. When *Jordan* was dried up for want of rain from heaven; that is, when the *Jews* infidelity had stopped the currents of divine grace, the preachers of the gospel turned to the heathen, as our prophet did to *Zarephath*, which belonged to *Zidon*. Yea, they were commanded to dwell there, to take up their abode with us *Gentiles*, and settle amongst us, until the day that the Lord shall send rain upon *Israel*.—O may this prove a true intimation, that God will, at length, send a gracious rain on his antient inheritance, and refresh it when it is weary!

The famine, inflicted as a judgment on *Israel*, had extended itself to other lands.—The sins of God’s people, like the sin of *Adam*, affects the whole world with a curse: But the sin of ignorance is more excusable than the sin of those, who have the light of God’s word, yet follow it not.—Hence it came to pass that the widow of *Zarephath* found so much more

more favour than any of the widows of *Israel*^b.—She had some *meal* and some *oil* left; so had the wiser sort of the *Gentile* world; that is, their stock of virtue, and the ordinary gifts of grace were not quite spent: They had some remains of goodness left. And our Lord saith, “To him that hath shall be given.” These ordinary gifts, of natural goodness and honesty, [our *bread* and our *oil*] shall never waste nor fail, if so be we receive the *prophet* into our houses; that is, if we entertain the gospel in our hearts by faith.

We cannot but observe, how noble, how generous, a faith this was of the poor widow! She had but *one handful of meal in a barrel*, and but *a little oil in a cruse*; and yet is hospitable to the stranger: Nay, on his bare request, served the prophet, out of that small pittance, even before herself, yea, before her own son: And that without money, and without price.—Such is the faith, and such the obedience, that most recommends us to God. If we so trust him, as she did, and even part with our all, for his sake, we shall be no losers, but infinite gainers: We may not only be assured of more grace, but depend on his kind providence, for the supply of all our necessary wants: Our *bread* and our *oil* shall never fail. Our alms and liberalities shall not lessen, but increase our store.

We are further told, this widow had a *son*, and that he died.—So the *Gentile* church, before the coming of Christ, brought forth children indeed, but they *died* by a premature death.—The disease of lapsed nature is mortal and incurable, for we bring it with us into the world. Die we must, at the appointed time; for so the divine sentence hath decreed. Our parents, with all their care and tenderness, cannot save us. But there is a life of grace, the spiritual and divine. which, by the threefold energy of the blessed Trinity in baptism (represented here by the prophet’s

^b See *Luke* iv. 26.

stretching himself *three times* on the child) is conferred on all the sons of the Church, by the act and office of her ministry. And, at the resurrection, death itself shall be swallowed up in victory; not only the soul *coming into us again*, and preserved for ever from the death spiritual, but the body also shall revive from death temporal; shall again be raised from its grave, and this mortal put on immortality. So that the whole of man^c, body, soul, and spirit, shall then be restored to a life ever happy, ever lasting. Amen! So be it.

Elias, reputed the *first founder* of the monastic life.] *Alteferra*, in his book concerning the original of it, tells us, in his first chapter, that the monks themselves derived the origin of their order from *Elias*, *Eliseus*, the *Rechabites*, &c. and cites *Jerom* as of the same opinion; but concludes, that, properly speaking, the first beginning of the monastic life, was rather occasioned by the times of persecution, when great numbers of Christians fled into the wilderness, and solitary places, to avoid the rage of their enemies.

^c *The whole of man.*] So *St. Paul*, according to the original [*ὁλόκληρον ἑμῶν*, 1 *Thess.* v. 23.] defines man, as consisting of body, soul, and spirit.—See this more largely explained in Vol. III. p. 321.





The Ninth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

I KINGS, Chap. xviii.

P R E F A C E.

WHEREAS the Proper Lessons on the great festivals of Christmas, &c. exhibit to us the articles and mysteries of FAITH, chiefly, as they are objects of our contemplation and belief; we are now to consider faith as an act of OBEEDIENCE, and to improve our speculation into practice.

To excite and direct us herein, the Church has hitherto, since the Trinity season began, set before us, in Sunday Lessons, the examples of those Saints in the Old Testament, who lived by faith more than sight, who manifested their faith by their works, and proved the reality, force, and glorious fruits of it, in their lives and conversions.

To-day, we have once more the noble example of the Prophet Elijah propounded to our imitation, whose faith, as it stands compared with Obadiah's, and opposed to the infidelity of Agag, appears not only genuine and true, strong and active, but elevated to a full assurance^a, even to a degree of certainty and knowledge; as appears by

^a Πιστοσύνη νήσιος, Heb. x. 22.

that

that confident, but humble, appeal of his to God,—Lord God of Abraham, let it be known, this day, that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, &c.

The great eminency of his faith appears also in his firm trust in God, his ready obedience, unshaken fortitude, and contempt of death; not only boldly appearing and presenting himself before an enraged king, who had vowed his destruction, and used the utmost diligence to apprehend him; but reproving him to his face, and challenging him with all his people and prophets, to enter into a fair trial with him, concerning the true God; they, for their BAAL, he, singly and alone, for the LORD his God.—By this we learn, that true faith, as well as perfect love, casteth out fear.—True faith is invincible, yea, omnipotent; “If ye have faith, said Christ, and doubt not, “nothing shall be impossible unto you^b.”—No difficulty shall be too great to surmount. See also St. Paul’s account of the virtue and power of faith, Heb. ch. xi.

But what is it gives this strength, this assured confidence, this heroic courage to faith? Even the same that made the Prophet Elijah so undaunted, in the cause of God, and so victorious; namely, the repeated experience of the presence of God to our souls, the frequent sense of his grace, his power, his goodness; the communion and intimate converse of the Holy Spirit, comforting, cheering, and bearing witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God; the frequent and sensible answers and returns to our prayers; the mountains of difficulties raised in our way, by pride, passion, or the world, but removed by faith, and cast into the sea of the divine mercy.—These excellent effects, these miracles of divine grace, and a true faith, which every sincere Christian doth, or may, feel and know, and see performed in his own heart, cannot but produce the same courage and resolution, the same

^b Matt. xvii. 20.

zeal and unshaken affiance in God, which the Church, this day, celebrates in the example and character of Elijah.

But as all are not arrived to this perfection, this full stature in Christ; as some are yet babes, and weak in faith; for the encouragement of such, we may observe in Obadiah a sincere, though timorous, faith; it had not yet subdued the fear of death,—What have I sinned, saith he, that thou wouldst deliver thy servant into the hand of *Abab* to slay me?—Thus Obadiah; thus Peter also began to sink, when his faith began to fail: Yet both found acceptance with God; because their love was sincere, though their faith but little.—Charity, therefore, is the fittest soil for faith: And if it light here, though, at first, as small as a grain of mustard seed, it will soon shoot forth great branches, and become a large tree.—Faith has something of the nature of vegetables; from a small seed it grows and increases, till it come to its full perfection; not instantaneously, and all at once, as some imagine, for that is contrary to the common course both of grace and nature, but by slow, and almost imperceptible degrees. And when it is come to its full growth, then, by a kind of anticipation of the heavenly state, it is lost in certainty, and swallowed up in love:—As it begins in charity, its consummation is to terminate there. So that, after a frequent experimental conviction of the great truths of the gospel, and when the fire from heaven is well kindled in our hearts, we become so confirmed in knowledge, so rooted and grounded in love, as not only to believe, but to know assuredly, that the Lord (even the Lord JESUS CHRIST) is THE GOD.

Let us consider next, the properties and marks of a true faith: First, It follows not numbers, but truth:—We find four hundred and fifty prophets on the side of error, and but one only a champion for the true religion. Secondly, It judges not of truth, by fashionable and popular opinions, by favour or fear, by court-encouragements or oppositions; but by the rule of God's word. Thirdly,

It rejects all novel tenets in religion, and adheres closely to the antient and primitive doctrines of the Church. "Stands in the ways, and sees, and asks for the Old paths, " where is the good way, and walks therein^a."—So that the true and orthodox faith is to be found only in the unity and communion with the true and orthodox Church. —This is clearly signified to us, in the example of the holy Prophet; who, in offering his sacrifice, chose not the same altar, which Schismatics and Idolators had used, but repaired the altar of the Lord, that was broken down; the altar, which his fore-fathers, in the first and purer ages of religion, had erected to the true God, for offering their sacrifices upon; but was now disused and overthrown.

The object of a true faith, is the most holy and undivided TRINITY: And this is likewise intimated to us, not only by that trine invocation, which the Prophet used in his prayer, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob; but also by that command of a threefold effusion of water upon his altar and sacrifice: That number, joined with the pouring on of water, not obscurely representing the mystery of the blessed Trinity, in whose name we are baptized.—The fire also of the Lord, which descended upon it from heaven, may not improperly signify the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is called the baptism of fire^c. And it is by faith alone, that we are qualified to be thus born again of water and the Holy Ghost. For so the gospel runs; "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." Mark xvi. 16.

Another essential property of a true faith is, that it be built on the doctrine of Christ and his apostles.—This also is prefigured to us by the holy Prophet; who, in repairing the altar, Took twelve stones, according to the number of the twelve tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name. For so the heavenly Jerusalem, we read, "Had twelve foundations, and

^a Jer. vi. 17.

^c Matt. iii. 11.

“ in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the lamb ^f.” To which also agrees St. Paul,——“ Ye are built upon “ the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus “ Christ himself being the chief corner stone ^g.”—This is the foundation, these the stones, (though disallowed and rejected of too many builders) which true faith chooses for building and repairing the altar of God; i. e. the true religion.

A further property is PRAYER:—by this the prophet brought fire, and afterwards rain, from heaven. “ The “ effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth “ much,” saith St. James ^h, alluding to the powerful influence of Elijah’s prayer; and such a prayer is, by the same Apostle, called the prayer of faith; it having this peculiar eminence above common and ordinary prayer, that it assuredly believes, that what is asked, shall be granted. ‘Tis therefore stiled by the Apostle, operative ⁱ and effectual; not only asking, but effecting, the thing we ask.——This, by the same inspired author, is called “ Asking in faith, nothing wavering.”——And this is the faith, which our Lord requires us to have in God, when he saith, “ Verily I say unto you, that whosoever “ shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be “ thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, “ but shall believe that those things which he saith, “ shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. “ Therefore I say unto you, whatsoever ye desire, when “ ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall “ have them ^k.”

To conclude; there are these other properties exemplified to us in the faith and prayers of this great prophet; First, A ready obedience, to execute the commands of God, though employed in the most difficult and hazardous enterprize,—Elijah went to shew himself to Ahab, ver. 2.—Secondly, Humility in office, yielding freely the

^f Rev. xxi. 14.

^g Eph. ii. 20.

^h Ch. v. ver. 16.

ⁱ “Ενεργητικῶν.
end.

^k Mark xi. 22, &c. See Annotation at the

precedence to others; Dress it first, for ye are many, ver. 25.—Thirdly, Humility in prayer; Elijah cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, ver. 42.—Behold the greatest prophet in the humblest posture, when he approaches the throne of grace! And it is ever so with all the true servants of God.—The more lively our faith, the profounder, of course, will be our humility; the more we know of God's majesty, the greater will be our reverence of him, and the greater abasement of ourselves, consequently the greater will be the sense of our unworthiness, when we, poor worms of the earth, come to appear in his presence.—Fourthly, Perseverance in prayer: Although so great a miracle had been wrought on his first prayer, and the answer immediately returned in fire from heaven, yet we do not find the prophet impatient at the second or third repulse of his prayer for rain. Go again and again, even seven times; desist not, till God be pleased to grant.—Fifthly, Charity to our neighbour. Elijah prays for his enemies, that God would please to remove his severe judgment of a three years famine, and send rain.—This charity be expressed still more practically, in his loyal and submissive demeanour towards his king, though an enemy, though a persecutor; running before his chariot as a servant, even to the walls of Jezreel.

The Ninth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

1 KINGS, Chap. xviii.

The triumph of faith and piety, over error and infidelity, in the history of Elijah's reproofing Ahab; his challenging, convicting, and destroying, the prophets of Baal.—By prayer he obtaineth rain, and putteth an end to the three years famine.

1. *AND it came to pass, after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.*

GOD keepeth not his anger for ever: After a judgment of three years famine, he relents, and thinks of mercy, even to an idolatrous and impenitent people; for we hear of no repentance in *Ahab*, nor re-

formation in his subjects. But God's ways are all mercy and truth: Whom he cannot humble by a famine, he now prepares to convince of his power, his goodness, his godhead, by a miraculous, as well as most seasonable removal of that judgment.

2. *And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab: and there was a sore famine in Samaria.*

Behold the courage of a true servant of God! The stronger our faith, the weaker will our fears be, and so on the contrary.—No creature was so odious to *Ahab*, and

his people, as *Elijah*: To him they ascribed all their misery; they railed on, and cursed the prophet for denouncing that judgment; but none fell out with their sins, which had deserved and brought it upon them.—But in this embassy of his prophet to *Ahab*, God provides for the honour of his servant, as well

as his own glory:—No rain must fall, till *Elijah* comes. The king, and his whole kingdom, shall be witnesses, that God will make good the word of his prophet. Nor is his prophet slack, though at the peril of his life, to carry a message of mercy to his bitterest enemies.—Which shall we most admire, in the holy man, his faith and ready obedience, or his charity? Every virtue is heroic; but the best effect of our admiration will be, to imitate so noble an example.

3. *And Abab called Obadiah which was the governor of his house: (now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly:*

4. *For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)*

Here we see it possible to preserve our virtue, in the worst of times, and the most corrupt company: Yea, to maintain the truth of religion in the midst of a profane and idolatrous court.—It is a great happiness to a nation, when God is pleased to raise the virtuous, yea, one virtuous man, to honour and dignity in the state.—But some he calls out, to appear and shine in public;

others are his secret ones, whom he reserves and employs in private. *Elijah* did not lie more concealed in *Zarephath*, than *Obadiah* did at court. Nor could he have done so much service to the Church, if he had not been as secret, as he was good: Policy and religion do as well together, as they do ill asunder: The dove without the serpent, is easily caught: The serpent without the dove, will sting or deceive. Religion, without discretion, is too simple to be safe; but cunning, without religion, is too subtle to be good. A conjunction of them makes a good man secure, and others happy. And we need not doubt, but the removal of the famine was, in great measure, owing to the fervent, though secret, prayers and intercessions of *Obadiah*.

5. *And Ahab said unto Obadiab, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we leese not all the beasts.*

6. *So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiab went another way by himself.*

were not at all, or were not worth their care. They will compass sea and land for worldly wealth, but have no concern to be rich towards God.

7. *And as Obadiab was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah?*

8. *And he answered him, I am: go tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.*

Observe the blindness, and vain cares, of worldly-minded men! How very solicitous is *Ahab* to save his *beasts*, how little careful to save his soul! He takes thought for *grass*, but none for mercy: He fears to *leese his beasts*, but he is not afraid to destroy God's prophets. Carnal hearts are ever grovelling on the earth, or delving into it; no more regarding God, or their souls, than if they either

Elijah presents himself first to *Obadiab*, before he meets *Ahab*: Here prudence is mixed with courage, and wisdom with faith! He prepares the king for his coming, by a previous notice, to shew that he was not afraid; he does it by the hand of a good man, and out of *Jezebel's* hearing, that he might obviate the danger that threatened his life, and the better provide for his safety.—*Obadiab* meets the prophet, knows him, and (as if he had seen God in him) *falls on his face* to him, whom he knew his master persecuted.—Though a great peer, though a prime minister of state, yet he had learned to honour a prophet, and to pay the respect that was due to the president of the sacred college.—*My lord Elijah*, is not thought too high a title; nor prostration itself too great an honour, to an holy man of God, from the great high steward of

of

of *Israel*.—Those, who are truly gracious, can never be wanting of their observances to the ministers of God. Nor does *Elijah* refuse the reverence, which he knew was paid to his office, rather than to his person; and for the sake of God, more than his own.

9. And he said, *What have I sinned, that thou wouldst deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?*

10. As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.

11. And now thou sayest, Go tell thy lord, Behold, *Elijah* is here.

12. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell *Ahab*, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.

13. Was it not told my lord, What I did when *Jezebel* slew the prophets of the LORD? how I hid an hundred men of the LORDs prophets, by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?

Obadiab finds the burden of this message too heavy for him. It seemed to him no less unkind, than it was bold. For thus he thinks; “ If *Elijah* appear before *Ahab*, “ He dies; if it be known “ that I met him, and bring “ him not, I die.—If I say, “ he will come voluntarily, “ and God shall alter his “ intention, it may cost me “ my head, that I did not “ apprehend him, and bring “ him by force. How unhappy then am I, that “ must either betray *Elijah*’s “ life or my own! And what “ have I done, that I should “ be singled out, to expose “ my friend, or myself, to “ apparent danger?”—Such difficulties is a man reduced to, that serves an ungodly prince: So hard is it to keep a good place, and a good conscience, in a wicked court.

58 *The Ninth SUNDAY* 1 Kings 18.

14. *And now thou sayest, Go tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here : And he shall slay me.*

15. *And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day.*

16. *So Obadiah went to meet Abab and told him : and Abab went to meet Elijah.*

believeth all things,—without misgivings, or jealousy; hopeth all things,—as for the best; and, if, deceived and betrayed into sufferings,—endureth all things,—with patience and meekness.

17. *And it came to pass when Abab saw Elijah, that Abab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*

But as piety is not over credulous, so neither is it diffident, or too distrustful. A solemn asseveration, especially from a good man, removes its fears, and silences all suspicion.—Charity is not apt to be suspicious; it thinketh no evil : Charity

Abab, no doubt, was startled to hear of *Elijah's* coming to meet him, but his hand was restrained from touching the prophet, though his heart retained the same inveteracy against him.—

The prophet's courage and virtue over-awed the tyrant's revenge, and turned his malice and fury to a gentle expostulation. He only smites with the tongue; he dares not strike with the sword.—How impotent is the most enraged envy, where Almighty Power has set a guard!—How stupidly blind are worldly irreligious men, who mistake their cure for the disease, their physician for an enemy! What should be for their wealth and true happiness, they esteem as their only misfortune; and the best means, and only hand, that can relieve them from their misery, they count the *troubler of their Israel*. Thus, in the first ages of Christianity, if, by the overflowing of the *Tiber*, the city were in danger, or by the not overflowing of the *Nile*, a dearth were occasioned; if a famine or pestilence

lence happened; it was the heathen's usual cry [*Christianos ad leones*], "Away with these Christians, to the lions;" as if they were the cause of those misfortunes, who were the only messengers of true happiness, and brought them the glad tidings of peace and salvation.

18. *And he answered, I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy fathers house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.*

We see not here the prophet throwing himself at the king's feet, suing for mercy, or making mean submissions, but boldly and undauntedly delivering his message, as the ambassador of a superior power, a greater king, the LORD of Hosts.

He preserves the dignity of his office and character, and, with as much freedom as truth, charges the king himself, and his idolatrous family, as the true authors of all the troubles, which the nation groaned under. He is not afraid to tax their crimes, as the real cause of all their sufferings:—So far was the holy prophet from judging vice to be a public benefit, as some modern prophets of *Satan* have the impious assurance to maintain, that he roundly pronounces the public calamity, to be owing to the violation of God's *commandments*.—With him therefore we may assuredly conclude, that the only disturber of men, of families, cities, kingdoms, worlds, is sin: That there is no such *troubler*, no such traitor to any state, as the wilfully wicked man: No such enemy to the public, as the enemy of God.

19. *Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.*

20. *So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.*

“ These

21. *And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*

22. *Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baals prophets are four hundred and fifty men.*

23. *Let them therefore give us two bullocks, and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:*

24. *And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.*

“These Israelites,” saith an antient interpreter¹, “adored God, and, at the same time, offered sacrifices to Idols. This made Elijah say, *Why halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him, (that is, follow him Only;) but if Baal, then follow him, and quite renounce the Lord. For the worship of both is incompatible, and approved of neither by the false gods, nor by the true: To reconcile both is impossible; according to that saying of our Saviour’s, Ye cannot serve two masters, nor love both at the same time.*”

This exposition of *Theodoret* is cited by a Popish commentator. But how directly it condemns the practice of Popery (which allows of idols, in conjunction with the worship of God), is too plain to be denied.—And yet, alas! we that pretend to a purer worship, are not free from the like abomina-

tion. For whoever sets up the things of this world, money, power, pleasure, &c. in competition with heaven, and thinks to make an alliance between God and mammon, to serve and to love two such contrary masters, is guilty of as great and as absurd idolatry,

¹ *Theodoret.*

as the Romanists or Heathens. For although such a one's external service may be addressed to God, yet the affections of the heart (and these are the chief sacrifice) are offered up to the idol, which he hath set up there.

25. *And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many: and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.*

26. *And they took the bullock which was given them and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal, from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leapt upon the altar which was made.*

—*There was no voice, nor any that answered.*]—Let this teach all that break the first of God's Commandments, and make to themselves any gods besides him, that all their labour and pains, all their offerings and service, all their prayers, and all their hopes of happiness from any other than him,

shall be vain and ineffectual.—No answer is to be expected, nor will any return be made, but what is the just reward of their folly and extravagance; even the cutting and wounding themselves *with* their own knives and lancets; that is, they hurt themselves, and are their own enemies.

27. *And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.*

28. *And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and*

We are not to blame this raillery of the prophet, but rather commend it, as justly due to that bold and impious competition, which these idolaters presumed to enter into, on behalf of their Baal, against the Almighty God of Israel.—The most High himself is often represented, in his word, as mocking and deriding such vain rivals,

lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

29. And it came to pass when mid day was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

we exceed not the bounds of gravity, an irony is of excellent service in the defence of religion, by turning upon vice and impiety the laugh and shame it deserves. And, “where satire and ridicule is discreetly employed in the cause of truth, it becomes “a duty^m.”—And who so like these *Baalites*, in their superstitious and bloody rites, as the poor deluded Romanists? See Captain *Carlton's* Memoirs, p. 185.

30. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, that was broken down.

31. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name.

32. And with the stones he built an altar in the name

rivals, such profane and impotent pretenders (see *Gen. iii.*

22. *Psaln ii. Prov. i. 26.*); and a wise antient tells us, [*congruit veritati ridere, &c.*]

“That it belongs properly
“to truth, to rally and
“laugh at her enemies, be-
“cause she is always sure of
“victory.” Where a due

decorum is preserved, and

This miraculous sacrifice represents to us, not only the Christian Baptism of water and the Holy Ghost (as hath been already observed) that it must also be administered in the name of the ever-blessed Trinity, and by the hands of God's own servant, a minister duly commissioned and authorized, as *Elias* was; but the pouring on of the water, may likewise figure to us (as *St. Ambrose* observes) another very necessary ingredient, namely, the tears of repent-

^m Ubicumque dignus risus, officium est. TERTUL.

of the L O R D : and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt-sacrifice, and on the wood.

34. And he said, Do it the second time : and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time : and they did it the third time.

35. And the water ran round about the altar, and he filled the trench also with water.

36. And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, L O R D God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day, that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

37. Hear me, O L O R D, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the L O R D God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

38. Then the fire of the L O R D fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

ance : which, if poured on all our sacrifices, whether of prayer, alms, or sacraments, will not only render them highly acceptable to God, but be assuredly dried up by the sweet illapse of the holy Paraclete. His heavenly fire will undoubtedly descend, and lick up all the water in the trench, and all that ran about the altar. It shall also consume, not only our sacrifice and good works, as it is the nature of fire to convert all things into itself ; but our very dross, our dust, yea, the very stones, the hardness and obduracy of our hearts, shall be consumed and done away.—The kingdom of heaven is ever near at hand, but repentance must be our first step towards it: Repentance must prepare the way to faith, and turn our feet into the way of peace: Repentance must precede comfort;—"Blessed " are they that mourn, for " they shall be comforted." Matt. v. 4.

64 The Ninth SUNDAY 1 Kings 18.

39. *And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.*

40. *And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape: and they took them, and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.*

We may also observe a further mystery in this sacrifice of *Elijah*, that as he sustained the person of Christ, so the burnt-offering and altar was an emblem of the Law. This, when the great High-priest, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, came to offer up his sacrifice, was consumed by the fire which fell from heaven.

The Gospel, which is called a fiery law, put an end to the *Mosaic* institutions, and, as it were, swallowed up the *Jewish*, both sacrifice and altar: As, by his dying, death was swallowed up in victory, so was the *Jewish* in the Christian religion.—Secondly, The precise time when this was done, is also prefigured. After three years and six months famine, the mysterious sacrifice was offered by *Elijah*; so at the end of three years and a half's preaching to an obstinate and perverse people (whose incredulity rejected the bread of life, and created a more grievous famine amongst themselves) our blessed Lord abolished the Law, by the sacrifice of himself.—Again, the effects of his death, and the glorious benefits of the Gospel, are likewise foreshewn: For so the general confession of the people [*the LORD he is the God; the LORD he is the God*], together with the slaying the priests of *Baal*, and the great abundance of rain which followed that act of faith and holy zeal, are most expressive types of the conversion of the world to Christianity, the suppression of idolatry, and the plentiful effusion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.—See St. *Aug. de Helia*, Vol. X. p. 201.

41. *And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and*

The four hundred and fifty prophets of *Baal*, represent the great multitude
and

drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain.

42. *So Ahab went up to eat and to drink, and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees.*

43. *And he said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.*

44. *And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a mans hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.*

45. *And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.*

46. *And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab, to the entrance of Jezreel.*

offered up on the top of Carmel, the mount of God;

and diversity of errors and false opinions, which all are subject to, that forsake the true Church. *Elijah* opposing, single and alone, and at last slaying them, is as lively an emblem of the unity of faith, and the prevalence, at length, of truth over falshood and impiety.—The ways of opinion are by-ways, as various and wandering, as the heart has passions, or the world temptations to mislead or deceive, and therefore generally wrong. While we follow these, the heavens are shut up; no showers from thence, no graces, no comforts, to fructify or refresh the soul: All is dry, all is barren.—Slay these false guides, and receive the truth, immediately the *sound of abundance of rain* is heard.—The *sound* is the gospel of peace; the *rain* is the merits and mercies of Christ.—But still the prophet, and his servant, must pray, before this shower can fall. And first, The prayer must be that of faith, this only hears the sound, and can assure us of plenty, *the sound of abundance*.—Secondly, It must likewise be

i. e. in his Church.—Thirdly, With humility, on our knees.—Fourthly, With hope, *looking toward the sea*, of infinite goodness:—Fifthly, With perseverance, *seven times*, yea, never cease till we see the *little cloud* arising out of that ocean of love:—But this cloud must resemble the *band of a man*.—The *cloud* was the law, the *band* is the gospel; the first gave but a shadow; the latter, the real and visible humanity of Jesus Christ. The consequence of all is, the heavens are soon covered with clouds and rain; the little hand is extended over all the earth; the desired blessing descends, and there *is a great rain*. And as this figures to us the manner, the plenteousness and universality of our redemption, with the progress and blessed effects of faith in general; so every true believer will experimentally find the same holy scene transacted in his heart, of faith, hope, humility, persevering and efficacious prayer.—But the first step he takes in this spiritual progress, must be to imitate the prophet, and begin with slaying all the teachers of error; that is to say, his sinful passions and deceitful lusts.

Pref. *And ye shall have them.*] To obviate an objection, that this promise of our Lord is not to be taken in the literal sense, because it seems too presumptuous to expect so extraordinary a completion; it must be considered, that the prayer of faith, which Christ here speaks of, is to be understood not only of the faith of every true believer in him, but chiefly of such a faith as is founded on an inward sense, and full assurance, of God's will to effect what is prayed for.—This kind of faith we find exemplified to us in our Lord himself, when he was about to raise *Lazarus* from the dead; he introduces the miraculous action, in words full of that assurance we are here speaking of:—*Father I thank thee, that thou hast heard me, and I knew that thou hearest me always* *. He knew beforehand, that the miracle he intended to work, would certainly follow his request to his Father.—In like manner we read of the Apostles and first Christians, that they attempted not any miraculous act, except, by some sensible impression of such a faith, they perceived, in their spirit, that it was God's will to effect the same:

* *John xi.*

Hence such a faith is called *inoperum*, operative, or rather, *operata*, see Hammond's note on Gal. v. 6. on the word *inoperibus*, which he well observes is to be understood in a *passive*, rather than an *active* sense; that is to say, as an act wrought by God in us, rather than in us by ourselves. In such case therefore, and through such a faith only, are we to expect that Christ's promise will be made good, and the thing we pray for, come to pass.





The Ninth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

1 KINGS, Chap. xix.

Elijah, through fear of Jezebel, flies into the wilderness: is comforted and fed by an angel: Comes to Horeb. God, appearing to him there, sends him to anoint Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha. Elisha takes leave of his friends, and follows Elijah.

1. *AND Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal, how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.*

2. *Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, Saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them, by to-morrow about this time.*

in favour of his servant, her folly gave him notice to escape, whom her malice intended to destroy.

3. *And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his* **R**EVENGE has not always power equal to its rage: This gave occasion to that proverbial saying, "Curst cows have but short horns." Envy has often more malice than wit.—Jezebel might have sent an executioner to the prophet instead of a threatening message, Had her cunning been as great as her fury. But by the over-ruling will of God, If, in the Morning Lesson, the character of Obadiab was a contrast to set off that

if e, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.

4. *But he himself went a days journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough, now, O LORD, take away my life: for I am not better than my fathers.*

that of *Elijah*, in this, we may say, the prophet's conduct is a kind of shade to his own example. How changed do we find him here! How different is the great *Elijah* from himself! then, his faith feared not a king, and all his guards; a king who had sworn his destruction: Here, he is frightened at the threats of a woman, and flies *for his life*.—Here then we see the frailty of human nature in the best and greatest of men, when left to itself; and may learn, by the sense of our own weakness, to ascribe our strength wholly to God's grace and support; and, at the same time, not to faint or despair, when he suffers us to fall. Such falls are the necessary preservatives of humility, that so both he, who stands, may take heed lest he fall; and he, that is down, may hope to rise.—*St. Paul* was caught up into the third heaven; but brought down again to be buffeted of Satan, that so he might not be exalted above measure ^a.

5. *And as he lay and slept under a juniper-tree, behold then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.*

Tho' the righteous have troubles, yet their troubles are of a different kind from those of the wicked: They may give them present sorrow, but not anxiety or torment of mind.—As the cause of their troubles is not the same, so neither is the effect. Their afflictions are only external, a "thorn in the flesh;" this they cannot but feel, and, perhaps, so sharply feel, as to pray to be delivered from it, with a seeming impatience; but it enters not into the soul; neither does it break their rest. Though *Elijah* re-

^a 2 Cor. xii.

quests *that he may die*, yet he *lays him down, and sleeps*. And the great *St. Paul*, when buffeted by the messenger of Satan, though he prays thrice to be relieved, he contents himself with the answer of God, “That his grace should be sufficient for him;” and then acquiesces in the divine will.—Both good and bad men desire rest from their troubles: This is natural to all: But the latter seek it through an evil impatience, and thinking to fly from the rod. The other may be as desirous to be dissolved; but it is, “That they may be with Christ.” This, both faith and reason assure them, “is far better^b,” than to continue in a miserable and sinful world.

6. *And he looked, and behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head: and he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.*

7. *And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee.*

8. *And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb the mount of God.*

By this we see the truth of what the Psalmist saith, “The Lord forsaketh not his that be godly, but they are preserved for ever^c.” —While we are employed in his service, he will certainly provide for us the necessaries of life: Either feed us with food convenient for us, or even enable us to live without food.—What need we then to fear; or why should we give way to anxious cares? *Elijah*, before, had been supplied with a daily provision of bread, by the miraculous increase of the oil and meal; now he is as mi-

raculously subsisted, by two meals only, for the space of *forty days and forty nights*. The same almighty power effects the same end by different methods, as his wisdom and providence sees fit. First, He fed his prophet by a raven, who had no such intention,

^b *Phil. i.*

^c *Psalms xxxviii. 28,*

and acted contrary to its own nature; next, by a poor widow, who had nothing of her own, but her charity, and a willing mind; and here by an *angel*.—If, by the first, we understand the world; even the worldly and carnal shall, by the over-ruling influence of God, be compelled to support and maintain his ministers, and faithful servants.—By the *widow*, may be typified the Church, who feeds us with the spiritual food of grace and mercy; with the bread of life to strengthen man's heart; with the oil of gladness and peace, to make him a chearful countenance.—By the *angel*, as aptly, is represented our Holy JESUS, who feeds us with the bread of Heaven; and who, by the lasting and supernatural efficacy of that bread, which supported his prophet for so long a space, and so long a journey, did foreshew that truth which he since has taught us in his Gospel; That he, that eateth this Bread, shall never hunger; he, that drinketh of this water, shall never thirst. In a word, we are here taught, that the faithful servants of God are fed by him, according to their respective wants, with the animal, sacramental, and heavenly, food: That the necessities of our bodies and souls are duly and seasonably supplied: And that all these blessings, both temporal and spiritual, are conferred by his hand, who filleth all things living with plenteousness^d. Where he sees Life, especially the spiritual, there he never fails to feed.

What dost thou here Elijah?

9. *And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What dost thou here, Elijah?* This question of God seems to carry in it a gentle reproof for his too hasty flight and fears. It was a weakness to be terrified at the threats of Jezebel, to place his safety in flight; and, much more, to wish for death. Yet God

10. *And he said, I have been very jealous for the*

^d Psalm cxlv.

LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I, only am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.

11. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:

12. And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice.

13. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave: and behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What dost thou here, Elijah?

14. And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel

indulges his servant's infirmity, and fortifies him with miraculous food for his journey: Nevertheless he taxes him with a defect of faith, and for deserting his proper station;—*What dost thou?*

“Is this the business I sent thee about?”—*What dost thou HERE?* “Is this the Place I sent thee to, when I charged thee with a commission to the people of Israel?”—See we herein the gentleness and mercy of the Divine Nature, and the frailty and frowardness of our own. Every act of impatience or fear, in the discharge of our duty, argues an imperfection in our faith.

“Where is your faith?” said Christ to his disciples, when perishing (as they thought) in a storm.—A just rebuke of their fears, when they had their Saviour with them!—

See we also the benefits and advantage which a good and gracious God draws out of these our fears, and natural imperfections. Here God takes occasion to shew his Almighty Power to *Elijah*, by rending the mountains, and breaking in pieces the rocks, shaking the earth, and after the earthquake, a fire; to teach him, That he alone

*have forsaken thy covenant,
thrown down thine altars,
and slain thy prophets with
the sword; and I, even I,
only am left, and they seek
my life, to take it away.*

is to be feared; that he alone
can protect us, or destroy:
That if we fear him, we have
nothing else to fear: That,
if he defend, no other power
can do us harm. This is a

Lesson always necessary, but
most effectual and seasonable, while any worldly dan-
ger alarms our fears. Then is the most proper time
to learn both spiritual fortitude and humility, when we
feel the most lively sense of our own weakness, and
God's omnipotence. "When I am weak, then am
"I strong," said St. Paul^e; or, as St. Gregory speaks
of our prophet, "The great security of his strength
"was the infirmity of his fear."—Another Lesson
(and, O my soul, thou art too conscious of the great
importance of such a Lesson, and how very imperfect
thou art herein, from that hasty warmth, that bilious
zeal, wherewith thou art wont to reprimand the faults
of others; and the too passionate reproof I this very
day^f used, as churchwarden, to some that caused a dis-
order in the Church); a lesson which God taught his
prophet, and us, in him, That a fiery zeal, in the
very service of God, is not agreeable to his own pro-
ceedings with mankind, nor acceptable to him.—By
the terrible effects of the *wind*, the *earthquake*, and the
fire, he shews, how easy it were for him to punish and
destroy the wicked; but that this is not his method,
nor has he any hand therein, when we make this me-
thod ours: It is therefore plainly declared, and often
repeated, that *the Lord was not in the wind*, was *not*
in the earthquake, was *not in the fire*; but, *in the still*
small voice;—in a mild, calm, gentle, admonition, as
free from all heat and passion, as from pride, or ill-
will.—To speak like him, and do the good we intend,
or he requires, our *voice* must be like his, *still* and
small.—So the same Lord, when he afterwards con-
versed amongst men, expressed, in his whole conduct,

^e 2 Cor. xii. 10.

^f 22 July, 1733.

74 The Ninth SUNDAY 1 Kings 19.

the same tender and meek spirit; he brake not the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax; neither was his voice heard in the streets.—We are also assured, and shall ever find it by experience true, that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” O grant us, Lord, thy dove-like Spirit, to be always mild, always innocent.

15. And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.

16. And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisba the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah, shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

Eljah discharged but one of these commissions: How then did he obey the command of God? It may be answered (as it is by one of the Fathers), he, in effect, discharged them all, by performing that one: By anointing *Elisba*, to succeed him as prophet, he provided for the anointing of the two kings, *Hazael* and *Jehu*. *Elisba*, who received a double portion of his Spirit, executed those two commissions

after the departure of *Eljah*.—Thus a good man, in the eye of God, is said to do that, which another performs through his means. The good that is done by virtue of his advice, his example, or his writings, is placed to his account: He being dead, yet speaketh.—Another remark, we may make, is this, that God’s nominating a king for *Syria*, as well as for *Israel*, is a proof, not only of his general providence extending to all the kingdoms of the earth, but that all kingly power is derived from him: That, not only good kings hold of him, but that heathen or wicked princes receive their power and titles from him that made them: “He alone is the Author of their power, who “is the Author of their being;” said *Tertullian*.*

* *Inde est imperator, unde est homo antequam imperator; inde potestas illi, unde est spiritus.*—To the very same purpose speaks *Irenæus*; *Cujus jussu homines nascuntur, hujus jussu & reges constituuntur.*

17. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael, shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu, shall Elisba slay.

How this was accomplished, with regard to Hazael and Jehu, is easy to apprehend, by the sequel of the history: But what was the sword of *Elisba*? Whom did he slay?—The answer to this is, that of the great Apostle, “His warfare was not carnal, but spiritual; his weapon not worldly, but heavenly:” His sword, therefore, was the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. With this he slew the wicked, by converting them to the truth; not destroying the sinner, but his sin.—These are the arms of the true minister of God. “Though they walk in the flesh, they do not war after the flesh: The weapons of their warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ^b.” Their weapons are the instruments of peace and love: They are ministers, not of division, but of reconciliation: “Their arrows are very sharp, and the people shall be subdued unto them.”—Even all that are wise, all that love God, or themselves, will be glad to be so subdued; yea, to be so slain: For, “O Lord, by these things men live; and, in all these things, is the life of our spirit; so wilt thou recover us, and make us to live;” as *Hezekiah* speaks, *Is.* xxxviii. 16.

Elijah had said, *I, even I, only am left*; as if he were the only one that truly served God in all *Israel*. This, as *St. Augustine* has remarked before us, was a spice of pride and censoriousness in him.

^b 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

this great prophet, which God is here pleased to correct by a gentle rebuke; *yet have I left me, &c.* as much as to say, “ You imagine yourself to be the
 “ only good man, the only true servant I have in
 “ *Israel*; but you are mistaken; *I have left me seven*
 “ *thousand* as faithful as yourself: You judge too rashly
 “ of others, too favourably of yourself.”—This example affords a most useful caution to religious persons, not to be too forward in passing a censure upon others, because it betrays, or, at least, leads to, pride, and self-applause.—When they look at the wickedness of the times, the general corruption of the world, the infidelity of the age, or the failings and infirmities of their brethren, they are too apt to condemn all but themselves: *I, even I*, is the sentence they pass on their own goodness, when they make the comparison between others and themselves.—This is a dangerous liberty which the best of men, though holy as the great *Elijah*, ought to be aware of, and avoid.—This made St. *Augustine* say, “ Take heed this pride be
 “ not worse than the very wickedness you blame :” Say not, “ I alone” [*noli solum te dicere*]. And the saint tells us, “ There is but one remedy against this
 “ secret self-justification, and that is, not to entertain
 “ any disadvantageous sentiments of our brethren :
 “ But rather to look into ourselves, and strive to be
 “ what we wish in others, and then we shall not so
 “ much think of their being what we are not¹.”—It is indeed a virtue to be singular, when the service of God is grown out of fashion; but it is a vice to reflect on it as a virtue peculiar to ourselves.—The Gospel-spirit is more candid and ingenuous than the Law. Hence it is, that we find St. *Paul* (the greater St. *Paul*) say^k, “ Let not him that eateth, despise him that
 “ eateth not, &c.”—“ Let us not judge one another
 “ any more.” And, elsewhere, he saith, “ Yea, I
 “ judge not mine own self, &c.¹” “ But, forgetting

¹ *Aug. in Ps. xxx.*^k *Rom. xiv. 3.*¹ *1 Cor. iv. 3.*

" those things which are behind, and reaching forth
 " unto those things which are before, I press toward
 " the mark for the prize of the high calling of God
 " in Christ Jesus ^m."—" Let us therefore, as many
 " as be perfect," [or who think themselves so,] " be
 " thus minded;" as he advises ⁿ.

19. So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

20. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again; for what have I done to thee?

21. And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat: then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

As both our Proper Lessons for this day seem to point out to us, the nature and properties of practical faith; or faith, as it is an act of moral, as well as speculative, duty, we may draw from this passage some instructions of the greatest importance, concerning, First, The doctrine of instantaneous faith; and, Secondly, Of impulses, or spiritual sensations. First, As to the first, we see some resemblance of what is called instantaneous faith in the sudden and surprising effect of *Elijah's* casting his mantle upon *Elisha*.—He said nothing; he called him not: It is only said, *Elijah passed by, and cast his mantle upon him*; and then it follows, *He left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, &c.* Whence could this powerful, this wonderful, virtue proceed?

Was it owing to any secret charm in the mantle, or the extraordinary holiness of the prophet, that wrought this sudden change in *Elisha*; that made him quit his plow, leave his oxen, and run after the pro-

^m Phil. iii. 13; 14.

ⁿ Ver. 15.

phet? His servants, no doubt, were amazed at their master's behaviour; some of them, possibly, might think him mad, to run away all on a sudden, and leave his people, and his work. But this act of his may exemplify, and explain to us, that sudden operation of the spiritual life, which some have called instantaneous faith; and, because it is not commonly felt, is therefore less commonly understood.—That there is such a thing, we must not deny: This instance of *Elisba* (and many others of the like kind, such as the Apostles immediate compliance with the call of Christ, and leaving all to follow him; the sudden conversion of *Zaccheus*, and of many great sinners, at an instant); are undoubted proofs of the powerful effects of Divine converting grace, which raises at once, the dead in trespasses and sin, to a life of righteousness; and of that divine illuminating grace, whereby, in an instant, the Love of God is shed abroad in the heart.—Of this last effect, the carnal part of the world can have no apprehension or sense of it; because they have no seed or principle in their hearts for this divine illapse to kindle upon: They have not the Spirit, nor any thing analogous, or congenial^o, thereto in their complexion; and therefore remain unmoved and insensible; yea, because they feel not this Divine Fire themselves, they deride it in others. Even many serious and religious people are strangers to these extraordinary sensations, which they perceive to be in others, and not in themselves.—Again; Some of those very persons, who have been suddenly touched by this heavenly influx, who indeed feel, and cannot but feel, it; yet, through inexperience, or misapprehension of its true nature, or of the right use, and true end, of it, are carried as suddenly away into egregious and most dangerous errors.—As to the *nature* of it, we allow it (when genuine) to be a ray of the Divine Spirit; and,

^o See this explained by Dr. *H. More*, in his *Treatise of Enthusiasm*, p. 44.

where-

where-ever he sheds a more than ordinary flow of light and grace, there the heart cannot but feel an unusual ravishment of spirit, which transports it all at once to despise the world, its profits, and its pleasures; to run with *Elisha* after the prophet; to forsake father and mother; and, with great zeal, engage in the ways of religion.—So far is well, and must be commended.—But, for want of attending to the right Use of this Divine Communication, dreadful are the falls, and deplorable the errors, which too many, who have begun thus well, do afterwards plunge themselves and others into.—Now the right Use of this spiritual gift, as the Holy Spirit himself informs us, 1 Cor. xii. 7. is, “To profit withal” [Πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον], for the use and end of profiting ourselves and others.—The use of all light is to guide us in the way, to discover what is fit to choose, and what to avoid: So the right use of this light of the Spirit is to guide our paths in the ways of wisdom, and true piety, to eschew evil, and to do good.—Whoever applies it not to this use of searching out his spirit, and the corruption of his heart, the nature, the kinds, the filth, of sin, as well as exploring the Word and Will of God, but falls into self-complacency, and fondly flatters himself that he has got into a state of assurance, and indefectible grace and perfection; such an one, we may assuredly know, abuses the sacred gift to a purpose very contrary to what it was intended for; nay, it may be feared, is fallen from grace, and, without repentance for so great an abuse of the Divine favour, will inevitably perish. It seems, therefore, of the greatest moment, though not so directly pointed out by our Lesson; yet, as enthusiasm is now reviving amongst us, it behoves, I say, to consider, more particularly, the cause of so fatal a miscarriage.—The cause is plainly this. These men, who so assumingly boast of the Spirit, mistake both the use and the end of this spiritual gift. The Holy Spirit, which bloweth where it listeth, divides his gifts severally as he will: It is
not

not out of more favour to one than to another, that he awakens and excites the spiritual life more in one person than in another (which, in the modern canting phrase is called Regeneration, New Birth, Instantaneous Faith, Perfection, &c.); but for the use of edifying the Church.—If it be received, as it ought to be, with fear and trembling; and applied to the exercise of humiliation, self-abhorrence, and a sincere repentance (which is the true and right use of this excellent gift); we may be assured it is the first motions, and happy beginning, of the spiritual life. But if, passing by our sins, and neglecting the acts of mortification and contrition, we suffer our vain hearts to be carried away with the self-pleasing notions of a strong faith, and a mere confident assurance of impeccability, and unfailing grace; this is that turning away of the simple, which shall slay them^p, and a sore and unhappy delusion: For when this seed of the Spirit falls into such bad ground (the weeds, the stones, the thorns, untaken away), it comes not up in the fruits of the Spirit, but in the wild fruits of nature; yea, it depraves the very Grace of God, and even of nature itself, and makes a man more wicked, and more the child of hell, than he was before. Every vice, that before was natural, becomes spiritual, and every one of the deadly sins becomes more deadly than ever. Thus the corruption of the best of things turns to the strongest poison: And hence, it comes to pass, that we so often, in persons professing religion, see that spiritual pride and contempt of others; that bitter zeal, and implacable persecuting spirit; that detracting and censorious, that unrelenting, ungenerous, yea, cruel and unjust, temper towards those, who are not of their own kidney. This was that leaven of the *Pharisees*, which our Saviour so frequently, and so severely, condemns; this is that exterminating zeal of the Romanist, and

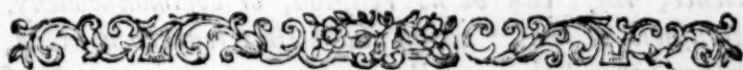
^p Prov. i. 32.

that narrow contracted spirit of the Sectary, which limits the mercy of God's infinite Goodness, and confines election and grace to themselves only, and their own party.

Secondly, It is of great use to consider the doctrine of *impulses*, and spiritual sensations, that we may know how to distinguish the true from the false; and how to be assured of the truth of the heavenly illapse, whenever it does visit our hearts. Some of these marks our Lesson intimates to us in the example and character of *Elisba*. First, It is orderly and regular, comporting with our ordinary callings, and the common (if honest) concerns of life. It comes, while we are employed in our lawful business; not running about, from place to place, after this or that celebrated preacher; but in the way of our profession, and while we are engaged in the necessary duties of that state, to which God has been pleased to call us. It came to *Elisba* as he was driving the plow. He ran not first after *Elijab*: *Elijab* came to him; threw his mantle upon him; and then indeed he followed him.—Secondly, It is to be expected only from the ministry of an *Elijab*, a true prophet, a minister duly commissioned of God.—Such only can cast upon us the true mantle, the robe of righteousness, the ornaments of Christ.—They only can give a portion of the Spirit, who are employed by the Spirit.—Thirdly, It not only moves the heart, but changes it. It first smote *Elisba* with a desire of heavenly things, then made him leave his oxen, and his plow, his temporal and carnal pursuits: His passion for earthly things, which in themselves were both lawful and necessary, is suddenly kindled into the love of God.—Fourthly, It acts not rashly and precipitately, but observes decency and prudence.—*Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father, and my mother, and then I will follow thee*, said *Elisba*.—The spiritual man, as he is not immediately puffed up, with a conceit of his own sanctity, above others, so he takes an handsome and becoming leave of the

VOL. IV. G world.

world. He breaks not the rule of civility and good-manners, much less of natural duties, and those obligations, which his profession, and the relation he bears to others, especially to his parents, or his family, have laid upon him.—He *kisses* them at parting; that is, he leaves them not abruptly, or for want of love, much less out of a proud conceit of pre-eminence, or self-sufficiency.—He leaves them indeed (if need so require), but in the spirit of benevolence and charity.—*Elisba* first *kisses* his father and mother, before he goes after *Elijah*.—Fifthly, On the part of the minister, whose words, or whose example, has kindled this spark of Divine Love, we may here likewise observe the character of the true man of God: He assumes nothing to himself; he regards God only as the cause, and efficient principle; himself as the instrument only, and the channel, through whom so great a blessing is conveyed. *What have I done to thee*, saith *Elijah*? “What am I” (saith the true servant and minister of Christ) “but a poor instrument in the hand “ God, to communicate his grace to others, and “ to profit withal? therefore to him alone be all the “ glory, and all the praise.” He never ascribes any thing to himself, as of himself; never gives way to high thoughts, nor takes any vain complacence in the act, be it ever so holy; but as the Apostle advises, “As he hath received, even so he ministers the same “ to others, as a good steward of the manifold grace of “ God.”—Another instructive mark arises from the conduct of *Elisba*: When he changed his life of husbandry for the office of a prophet, the business of earth for the business of Heaven, he sacrificed his *oxen*, and *boiled their flesh with the instruments*: So a good man, that dedicates his life or endeavours chiefly to the service of God, turns his very temporal affairs into spiritual offerings; and sacrifices every interest of pleasure or profit to the love of God, and the benefit of souls.



The Tenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

I KINGS, Chap. xxi.

P R E F A C E.

THIS Lesson sets before us the nature, and deadly fruits, of the sin of covetousness.

This vice may well be reckoned among the mortal sins^a: Here, it slays the innocent Naboth, for his vineyard; and guilty Ahab, for his yielding to its suggestions. From whose example we also learn the evil fruits, and unhappy effects, of it.—First, Disquietude and restlessness of mind inseparably attend it: Ahab grew heavy and displeased; fretted himself sick, because he could not have the vineyard he longed for; he laid himself down on his bed, and would not eat^b. Covetous men destroy their own ease, and lose every present comfort of life. They enjoy no satisfaction in what they have, because of the absurd inclination they entertain for what they have not.—It is ready to embrace the first temptation the devil offers for gratifying its desires: It lays the heart open to every other sin, though never so foul, which may serve to promote its ends.—It stifles and destroys all sentiments of

^a It is constantly, by divines, counted one of the seven deadly sins.

^b Ver. 4.

justice and honour, humanity and religion: For, where avarice reigns, there can be no conscience; and, without conscience, there can be no religion, or common honesty. Covetousness is the “unjust judge that feareth not God, “neither regardeth man^c.”—It often proceeds to acts of violence, oppression, and murder, where it is not restrained by the want of power.—And always ends in the certain perdition of the unhappy wretch that follows its suggestions, except it be timely prevented by repentance, and divine grace.

Another useful instruction which our Lesson points out to us, is this, That, “the fear of man bringeth into a “snare, but the fear of God delivereth from sin.”—Naboth steadily adheres to the Law of God, which forbade him to alienate his patrimony; and dies a martyr for righteousness sake. He lost indeed his life, but kept his innocence, and was delivered from sin: He lost his temporal estate, but, in lieu thereof, gained a better and more enduring inheritance in the kingdom of Heaven. Whereas the elders of Jezreel sacrificed their conscience to their fears, and chose rather to offend God, and forfeit the hopes of glory, than incur the resentments of a wicked king.

Upon comparing these two examples together, we may also learn the true nature and extent of that obedience which is due to kings, and superiors: He that obeys them in an evil thing, is disobedient to God; he rebels against his supreme Lord and King, and incurs the danger of eternal punishment:—He that submits to suffer for conscience sake, and obeys God rather than man, exercises the virtue of Naboth, and has chosen that better part, which shall not be taken away from him: He follows the example of the holy martyrs, and will receive their crown; yea, the example of Jesus Christ, whose obedience was made perfect through suffering^d.—This then is that genuine PASSIVE OBEDIENCE which every true Christian professes; and ought to practise, whenever he is called thereto.—But the declared will, and express command, of God, is the only sure

^c Luke xviii. 2.

^d Heb. ii. 10.

and authentic rule to direct our conduct, when such interesting trials of our sincerity happen to befall us.

The Tenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

I KINGS, Chap. xxi.

Ahab covets Naboth's vineyard: By the wicked contrivance of his queen is put in possession of it: Is met by the prophet Elijah, and threatened with Divine Vengeance for his sin. He expresses some repentance, and thereby obtains a present reprieve from the judgment denounced.

1. **A**ND it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

2. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house, and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it: or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

AFTER the signal and repeated instance of God's goodness to Ahab, in two complete victories over the king of Syria, and enlarging his dominions by new conquests, as well as recovering the cities, which, in former wars, had been taken from the kings of Israel (as related in the foregoing chapter), so far was he from true contentment; so far from enjoying the abundance he possessed; that here we find this mighty monarch turn slave to his impotent desires, and fall a victim to

the most abject vice of covetousness. He could not be satisfied with all the plenty that royal wealth could bestow, or conquest acquire, while one poor spot of ground, his neighbour's vineyard, was looked upon

with a longing eye, as a necessary addition and improvement to his estate. — What avails it then to increase our store, if concupiscence also increase?—This insatiable passion, we see, will make the greatest princes poor; so that, not he who has much, but he that covets little, is the true rich man. A competency therefore is the only wealth; and the best way to obtain it, is rather to contract our desires, than to enlarge our estates:—By this example, we may also learn the plausible, but most insidious, nature of covetous desires:—Their first birth appears with infant smiles, mild and innocent; speaks fair, pretends justice, and even generosity; *I will give thee a better vineyard*; or, at least, an equivalent: *If it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money*.—But, “though its words be smoother than oil, it hath war in its heart.”—As will appear in the sequel of this history.

3. *And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.*

Naboth refuses to sell, or part with, his inheritance;—not out of stubbornness, pride, or obstinacy; but in regard to the Law of God; such alienation being forbidden by an express law^e, which saith, “The land shall not be sold for ever;” and again, “Every one of the children of *Israel* shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.”—By this honest refusal, *Naboth* appears to be a man that feared God, and had respect unto his commandments.—He is also a pattern and example of that moderation and contentment which good men enjoy in a small fortune; but which worldly men want in the midst of the greatest affluence.—His own patrimony, though small, yet, because it was his own, and descended to him by *inheritance* from his ancestors, he prefers before a larger vineyard elsewhere. Nor has he that worldly cunning and address to make ad-

^e *Leuit. xxv. Numb. xxxvi.*

vantage of a king's passion for his ground; or to set an exorbitant price on his land, because it lay so commodious for another's use. In this, how short was he of the notable managers of these our days, whose skill lies in the arts of extortion, and their wisdom in over-reaching the weakness of their neighbours.—But if he was less politic in driving a bargain, he was far more wise towards God and himself, in securing his innocence.

4. *And Ahab came into his house, heavy and displeased, because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken unto him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers: and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.*

How precarious and fleeting is the happiness of the greatest and wealthiest of men, if founded only on this world's enjoyments! And yet, how real and sincere is the pain which a disappointment brings! Here, a mighty king counts himself miserable, because he cannot have his garden enlarged: This one cross blasts all his blessings.—He does not indeed break out into rage and violence; but takes pet, like a wayward child, and falls sick for losing his longing.—Herein also we may remark the different operation of covetousness upon the natural tempers of those it possesses. The proud it inflames with disdain; the envious, with malice and revenge; the wrathful, with fury; and the melancholy it sinks into sadness and dejection of spirit. So that we may, from hence, form a judgment of *Ahab's* natural disposition (consequently of our own by the same rule, according as any sin works upon the passions), and infer, that his complexion was melancholy and phlegm. Yet his sin, though less outrageous, was not less in degree of guilt; because the seeming gentleness of his resentment was owing more to the temper of his nature, than to the virtue of his mind.—He acted, indeed, more like a child than a man, much less as a king (as his

more hardened wife upbraided him); yet, in the sight of God, we may presume, his sorrow was no more an extenuation of his crime, than it was a mark of his repentance. Nay, nothing can be a stronger symptom of a consummate habit and obduracy in vice, than grief of heart for want of power, or opportunity, to carry it into execution.

5. *But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?*

perpetration of his unjust designs!

6. *And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thine vineyard for money; or else if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.*

How impious must that fast be, which is kept for lack of success in sin! And how wretched comforters are they, who, *Jezebel* like, assist the wicked man in the

St. *Ambrose* draws a parallel between *Abab* and *Naboth*, and shews that the king was much the poorer man of the two:—For thus he argues,—“His address to *Naboth*, as well as his craving “want, are plain indications “of poverty. Give me, saith “he.——What language is “this, but that of a needy

“beggar?—Give me thy vineyard: The want of this “vineyard appeared, to his vicious desires, a matter “of as great necessity, as want of bread to the hungry, or of clothes to the naked. But there is this “shameful difference between the cravings of the rich, “and the poor, beggar; the wants of the first are the “most abject and vile of the two; they are no less “base, than they are criminal and unnecessary.”

’Tis observable, that *Abab*, in his relation of *Naboth*’s refusal, takes no notice that it proceeded from conscience, rather than wilfulness. Had he regarded that true reason, it might have checked his unlawful desire, and justified *Naboth*’s refusal.—But this is no satisfactory answer to a worldly person: The carnal mind

mind sees no argument in any plea of religious duty : Tenderness of conscience to him is an idle pretence, a vain scruple. — *Abab* had egregiously violated the first table of the law by his idolatry : No wonder then that he pays no regard to any part of the second. — He that is false to God, is seldom just to his neighbour.

7. *And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry : I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.*

8. *So she wrote letters in Ababs name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city dwelling with Naboth.*

9. *And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people :*

10. *And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, thou didst blaspheme God and the king : and then carry him out, and stone him that he may die.*

Jezebel, like a true daughter of *Eve*, instead of being an help-meet for her husband, acts the part of a tempter, of a serpent, of a devil, to him. She reproaches not his vice, but his want of courage, to make himself master of his desires. And, as she was an incendiary to his unhappy passion, so she proved a skilful midwife to bring forth that death which lust had conceived. Satan, who caused the disease, soon sends him a physician. He knew of old how to make use of such helpers. — How fatal then is the wedlock that couples us with an agent for hell ! *Abab* wanted not wit, nor wickedness ; yet is but a novice to this *Zidonian* dame : She persuades him his government cannot be free, except it be licentious ; that

there should be no bounds to sovereign power, but, arbitrary will. — But whose indignation rises not to hear *Jezebel* name a *fast* ? — The disguise of holiness doubles a villainy. — This murder had not been half so foul, if it had not been masked with a shew of religion, and the formality of justice.

11. *And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them.*

12. *They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.*

13. *And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.*

14. *Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.*

and their obedience and loyalty conform to the most enormous crimes.—*Naboth*, it seems, was too upright a man to be employed; and, for the same reason, too good to be let live. He was indeed *set on high among the people*, and advanced for the time, but it was with design that his fall might be the greater, and his ruin the more sure.—His better life was unfashionable, and a reproach to his fellow-citizens; therefore a constant eyesore to them, as his vineyard was to the king. Covetousness robbed him of the one, and envy of the other.—'Tis crime enough, in bad times, to be a good man.

It seems not a little strange that *Jezebel* could have the assurance to propose to a whole body of magistrates so flagrant an iniquity, so barbarous a design. But it appears much more surprising, that a grave senate, even all the *elders* and *nobles* of a city, should so implicitly comply with her bloody commands, and execute a commission so notoriously cruel and unjust. But *Jezebel* knew her men; and whom she wrote to.—Evil princes never want wicked instruments to execute their will. As their example spreads a general degeneracy of manners among the people, so it is their accursed policy to fill all places of trust and power with none but men of profligate and corrupt principles; whose conscience can truckle to their interest,

Naboth

15. *And it came to pass when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead.*

16. *And it came to pass when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.*

17. *And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,*

18. *Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it.*

19. *And thou shalt speak unto him saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.*

with his good fortune, in comes *Elijah* with an errand of vengeance from God; with an heavy reckoning for the purchase he had made; even blood for

Naboth suffers for treason; his estate is of course escheated to the king.—A cheap purchase, as *Ahab* and his wife thought; having saved by the attainder the whole price of the land. And this advantage *Jezebel* forgets not to congratulate in her message to the king, *Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, which he refused to give thee for money.* As much as to say, “I wish you joy of it; you have it now for nothing.”—Thus far, this scene of villainy proceeds; thus far, God permits their wickedness to prosper, and seems to sit still as an unconcerned spectator.—*Ahab*, revived with the success, and applauding the project, as if Heaven and earth favoured his design, throws off his sick pet, and hastens down to take possession.—But, alas! the very prosperity of fools shall prove their ruin: The greatest judgment on sinners is to succeed in their wickedness. While *Ahab* is felicitating himself on his new acquisition, just entering upon possession, and highly delighted

blood; and to be paid on the very spot, where *Naboth's* had been shed.—Nor is one life sufficient atonement for the life of an innocent and good man: No less than *Abab's*; though a king; ; no less than his, and the lives of his whole family, though so numerous and powerful (see 2 *Kings*, ch. x.), can expiate the guilty consequences of one unbridled passion.—Sin is like a precipice; nothing so easy as to fall; nothing harder than to rise.—Justice may be slow, but is ever sure.

20. *And Abab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thy self to work evil in the sight of the LORD.*

21. *Behold I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Abab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up, and left in Israel;*

22. *And will make thine house like the house of Jereboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Abijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin.*

23. *And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.*

Hast thou found me, O mine enemy, saith Abab to Elijah.

'Tis the way of wicked persons to count them for enemies, who reprove them.

"He, that reproveth a

"scorner, getteth to himself

"shame; and he, that re-

"buketh a wicked man, get-

"eth himself a blot," saith

the wise man^f; that is, will

be branded with the name of

enemy; or, at least, be called

an impertinent and busy bo-

dy. But how great a folly,

as well as injustice, is this!

—Did we but rightly con-

sider this thing, we should

soon be convinced, that who-

so hateth our faults, shews

the truest love to our per-

sons; but, whoso loveth his

own faults, is his own great-

est enemy. Nor can there

be a surer sign, that we are

in love with our sins, than

when we resent admonition,

^f Prov. ix. 7.

24. *Him that dieth of* and hate them that reprove
Abab in the city, the dogs us.
shall eat : and him that dieth in the field, shall the fowls of the
air eat.

25. *But there was none*
like unto Abab, which did
sell himself to work wicked-
ness in the sight of the LORD,
whom Jezebel his wife stir-
red up.

26. *And he did very abo-*
minably in following idols,
according to all things as did
the Amorites, whom the
LORD cast out before the
children of Israel.

27. *And it came to pass*
when Abab heard those words,
that he rent his clothes, and
put sackcloth upon his flesh,
and fasted, and lay in sack-
cloth, and went softly.

28. *And the word of the*
LORD came to Elijah the
Tishbite, saying,

29. *Seest thou how Abab*
humbleth himself before me?
because he humbleth himself
before me, I will not bring
the evil in his days : but in
his sons days will I bring the
evil upon his house.

In the character of *Abab* we see a most enormous criminal ; yet a pardon is obtained on a shew of repentance. In God's dealings with him, we have therefore an instance of the wise measures, wherewith his mercy and his justice are dispensed.—Notwithstanding the heinousness of *Abab's* faults, he finds mercy, upon his humiliation and repentance. But then this mercy bears proportion only to the degree of that repentance. — Now, as the sole motive of his penitence and humiliation was the dread of those judgments he had been threatened with, rather than any sorrow for, or hatred of, his sins ; his pardon, for that reason, is only temporal, and merely a reprieve for the term of his own life.—*I will not bring the evil in his days, but in his sons days will I bring the evil upon his house.*—Had his repentance been perfect

and sincere, it would have prevailed for reversing the whole sentence, as well as respiting his doom.—The very reprieve is, indeed, an Encouragement to the greatest sinners to repent. But, at the same time, such a mercy ought to appear terrible to those who stop
short

short in their course of penitence, and suffer it not to have its perfect work! Attrition itself, which consists in outward acts, such as, *rending the clothes, putting on sackcloth, fasting, and going softly*, is a good beginning of repentance, but not sufficiently available for a full release and free pardon of sin. How unwise then and unsafe must it be to trust thereto?—The truth is, external forms of mortification, affecting chiefly the body, may atone for that share of the penalty, which the body has incurred: But, for acquittal of the soul, she also must exert those acts which are proper to her nature, in the exercise of true repentance; for that no humiliation, but such as extends to the whole man, both to our bodies and our souls, can fully satisfy the divine justice.—In order, therefore, to this plenary absolution, repentance ought to consist of these four parts, Attrition, Contrition, Conversion, and Renovation.—These are like so many steps, which lead to an effectual pardon and peace. And they ought to be ranged also in the order wherein we have placed them.—The two first are necessary to begin with, the one respecting the discipline of the body, the other of the spirit; the one outward, the other inward; and both holding a proportion to each other, as well as founded on right motives, and a due sense of the moral turpitude, as well as danger, of sin.—The third, which is Conversion, respects God only, and the turning the whole stream of our affections towards him.—Fourthly, Renovation regards both God, and ourselves; and consists in a total renewal of our lives and actions, and is, properly, that effect of the preceding acts, which the scripture calls, “The fruits meet for repentance.”—The two first (*viz.* Attrition and contrition) may exist in a carnal man, through the terrors of conscience, and a servile fear of God’s wrath, such as we have seen in *Saul*^b, and here in *Abab*.—But then, if these two first parts,

^a *Matt.* iii. 8. ^b See fifth Sunday after Trinity, on 1 *Sam.* xv.

without the latter, are not sufficient to satisfy for the sin of the soul, 'tis as true, that, except the latter have been preceded by the former, we cannot be sure that they are sincere enough to be safe. If either be wanting, we repent but by halves : Our punishment may be lessened, but will not be wholly forgiven.





The Tenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

1 KINGS, Chap. xii.

Jehoshaphat king of Judah enters into alliance with Ahab the king of Israel, against the Syrians. Four hundred prophets of Baal promise good success; but Micaiah the true prophet of God foretells the defeat of that expedition, and the death of Ahab. He is cast into prison. Ahab is killed in the battle, and Jehoshaphat narrowly escapes.

1. *AND they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel.*

2. *And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.*

3. *(And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?)*

I Am as thou art, &c.] Jehoshaphat had married his son Joram to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel; and upon this occasion (we may presume) made this visit, and these professions of friendship, to Ahab; but the sequel of the history, both in what befel Jehoshaphat himself, and afterwards shews how much he was to blame in this part of his conduct, and how impolitic it

4. *And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.*

principles of true religion.

5. *And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the Word of the LORD to-day.*

6. *Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king.*

7. *And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?*

8. *And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man (Micaiah the son of Imlah) by whom we may enquire of the LORD; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.*

it is, as well as displeasing to God, for any one, professing his true religion, to make friendships or alliances with those, who are noted for impiety, as *Ahab* and *Jezebel* were; or even to enter into intimacies with such as differ from us in the

Jehoshaphat, in proposing, That God's will should be consulted, before they engaged in this war; and, after the four hundred false prophets had, with one voice, pronounced a happy issue thereto, his requiring, That a prophet of the LORD might be asked concerning the event; was a mark and expression of piety. But, at the same time, it is not a little surprising, that he could, without a holy indignation, sit and hear the prophets of *Baal* delivering their predictions; and still more wonderful, that, after he had heard the prophecy of *Micaiah*, he should venture to accompany a man who was doomed to destruction; and engage in a war, that, by the oracle of God, was condemned, and pronounced unfortunate.—But alas! we often see, even in religious persons, too much

98 *The Tenth SUNDAY* 1 Kings 22.

9. *Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah.*

10. *And the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets prophesied before them.*

11. *And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the LORD, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them.*

12. *And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the kings hand.*

13. *And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah, spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good.*

14. *And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.*

15. *So he came to the king, and the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king.*

16. *And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee, that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD?*

17. *And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master, let them return every man to his house in peace.*

18. *And*

of this faulty compliance with the sinful customs and ways of the world; and associating themselves too freely with persons, who shew no regard either for God, or the Church. See more on ver. 48.

We may observe, in the conduct of *Micaiah*, that character of integrity, fortitude, and zeal for truth, which all ministers and servants of the true God ought to express in their words and behaviour, especially when consulted concerning the will of God.

18. And the king of Israel said unto Jeheshaphat, Did I not tell thee, that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil.

19. And he said, Hear thou therefore the Word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand, and on his left.

20. And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and other said on that manner.

21. And there came forth a spirit and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him.

22. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

23. Now therefore behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.

24. But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?

25. And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.

26. And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the kings son:

27. And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.

28. And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Harken, O people, every one of you.

In the treatment, which this holy prophet met with, we see not only the ill usage which the faithful ministers of God are to expect from false prophets and evil magistrates, but the great slight of their admonitions and advice, which they too often meet with from persons professing even the same religion.

29. *So the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, went up to Ramoth-gilead.*

30. *And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.*

31. *But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.*

32. *And it came to pass when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it is the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: And Jehoshaphat cried out.*

33. *And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.*

34. *And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded.*

35. *And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound, into the midst of the chariot.*

We may hereby see, that ill men, however they seem to despise the threatnings of God, yet are timorous and daunted when they come into danger. *Abab* disguises himself when he goes into the battle.—He was hardy enough to defy the menaces of the oracle, but had not the courage to fight openly in the field.—He thinks, by such a precaution, to conceal himself from the vengeance of Heaven, and escape the danger he was threatned with; but the event shewed both the impiety and folly of first contemning, and then fencing against, the almighty power of God.—*Jehoshaphat* had like to have met with the same fate; but as his fault had in it more of indiscretion than impiety, his life was spared.

36. *And*

36. *And there went a proclamation throughout the host, about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country.*

37. *So the king died, and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria.*

38. *And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, and they washed his armour, according unto the word of the LORD which he spake.*

39. *Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?*

40. *So Ahab slept with his fathers, and Abaziah his son reigned in his stead.*

41. *And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.*

42. *Jehoshaphat was thirty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem: and his mothers name was Azubab the daughter of Shilhi.*

43. *And he walked in all the way of Asa his father, he*

This part of the history sets before us the verification of those judgments, which God, by his prophets, had denounced against the idolatrous and rebellious *Ahab*.—It likewise teaches us, That, as nothing happens by chance, so nothing, either of power, or cunning, can secure us from the hand of God.—The man who drew his bow, and slew that unhappy king, did it *at a venture*; but it was God, who directed both the hand and the arrow.

In ver. 48. it is said, that *Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold; but they went not, for the ships were broken at Eziongeber*.—This part of the history is more fully related in *2 Chron. xx.* And the reason of that miscarriage of his design is there ascribed to the alliance he had made with *Abaziah* the wicked and idolatrous king of *Israel*. It is there said, ver. 35.—“After this”

turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD: nevertheless, the high places were not taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places.

44. And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.

45. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he shewed, and how he warred, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

46. And the remnant of the Sodomites which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land.

47. There was then no king in Edom: a deputy was king.

48. Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold; but they went not; for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber.

49. Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships: but Jehoshaphat would not.

50. And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father,

—(even after many things he had done right in the sight of the LORD, which are recorded of him in that chapter) “ he joined himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly; and he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish, &c. Then Eliezer, &c. prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works; and the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.”—Deterred by this prophecy, Jehoshaphat refused, on Ahaziah’s further application, to proceed in that design, as we are told in the 49th ver. of our Lesson. He was convinced, by that disaster which happened to his fleet, and by the message from God, that the alliance he had made with Ahaziah, was not well pleasing to the Lord.

Upon the whole, we are taught the sin and danger of associating with ill company; that we ought to shun the conversation of wicked men, and keep out of the reach of bad example. “ Evil communication corrupteth good

and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

51. *Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria, the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel.*

52. *And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.*

53. *For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.*

“good manners:” And every sinful compliance with the children of this world, is a base betraying the cause of virtue, and exposing our faith to the influence of seducing spirits. The good Spirit of God is grieved, and provoked to forsake us, when we give ear to deceivers, or too freely converse with them.—If we choose the company he dislikes, we must not expect he will vouchsafe his presence, to bless and prosper our designs.—He warns us, by our conscience, as he did *Jehoshaphat*, by his prophet, against the ill consequences of such criminal friendships; and, as that king’s example

shews, we are not to presume on his grace or wisdom to secure us, if we rashly engage in sinful correspondences, or wicked company, it is more his goodness than our own merit, if we escape immediate punishment.—If he inflict the penalty on our estates, and spare our person, it is a mercy; a far greater mercy, than such imprudence deserves.





The Eleventh SUNDAY *after* TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

2 KINGS Chap. v.

Naaman the Syrian cured of his leprosy by washing in the river Jordan: Gehazi punished with leprosy for his covetousness.

P R E F A C E.

THE instructions, which a Christian audience is to learn from this Lesson, are couched chiefly in the spiritual sense, and mystical meaning, of the history; and may be summed up, and comprised, under the following heads:

1.—1. In general, we are taught, that sin, which is the leprosy of the soul, is incurable by any human means, and without the sacred laver of regeneration in the Church.

—But Naaman was a Syrian.

2. Now the term Syrian, here, and elsewhere (see Deut. xxvi. 5.) is the emblem of man in the state of nature; as yet unbaptized, and an alien from the commonwealth of Israel.

3. There is therefore no cure for original sin (that leprosy we contracted from our first parents) but BAPTISM:—So the prophet to Naaman, Wash and be clean.

4. And no washing is effectual to that end, but in the CHURCH.—Abana and Pharpar may be naturally better
than

than all the waters of Israel; yet no waters but those of Jordan, no element but that which is sanctified by the Word of God, and administred by a prophet, one duly commissioned by him, can avail to the mystical washing away of sin.

5. The coming again of Naaman's flesh like unto the flesh of a little child, does very significantly represent to us the NEW BIRTH in baptism.—It is both the effect and proof of regeneration, that we become as little children, So our Lord affirms, "Except ye become as little children. ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven^a."—This regeneration is often spoken of by the apostle, under the character of "putting off the old man, and putting on the new man:"—"The new creature:"—"Renewing of the Holy Ghost," &c. And is likewise intimated by the Psalmist in that elegant comparison, "Making me young and lusty as an eagle^b."

6. Naaman taking earth, yea, a burden of earth, doth aptly figure to us that humility, wherewith we are to offer up our sacrifices to God.—When water bath cleansed us, we are not to forget our earth, that is, ourselves; we are not to be exalted above measure into an imaginary conceit of an instantaneous perfection. Though the guilt of original sin be taken off by baptism, yet the penalty of mortality, and the frailty of our lapsed nature, do still remain.—"Dust thou art," frail and miserable man, still; subject to fall again into sin:—"And to dust shalt thou return."—The sting indeed of death is taken away; but the sentence of death continues still in force, and unrepealed, until the day of resurrection: Then, but not before, shall sin and death be both destroyed.

7. But the earth, as well as water, must be holy; taken from the Land of Israel, the Holy Land, the Church of God. For hereby the human nature of Christ seems to be represented; the holy earth being a fit emblem of his sacred body, as the water is of his precious blood.

^a Matt. xviii. 3.

^b Ps. ciii.

II. *We have also, in this Lesson, a remarkable specimen of the two noted degrees of faith; namely, the historical, and the effectual.*

1. *The historical, or that faith which is grounded on credible testimony, and moral evidence.—Naaman bearing a report, that there was a prophet in Israel, who could cure his leprosy, comes to him, and hears the word of God; but yet, with difficulty, is persuaded to believe, and comply. To a natural man the Divine word appears, at first hearing, simple, unpleasant, and disgustful; because it is contrary to our corrupt nature, and worldly apprehensions. But further consideration, and faithful advice, will reconcile us to its commands. When Naaman's reason was convinced, and had got the better of his passion, he went down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, and was made clean.*

2. *Efficacious and saving faith:—This kind of faith can only be subsequent to, and follow after, baptism; so Naaman, AFTER his cleansing, returned to the man of God, and said, NOW I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel. This is a degree beyond mere believing; hath a mixture of experience, and is improved into knowledge.—Now I know, &c. He saith not, Now I believe, but, Now I know, &c.—I know now what I never knew or understood before.—Of this kind is that, “full assurance of faith, that evidence of “things not seen,” which the apostle speaks of^c, and which every true member of Christ hath, and doth feel, when he stirreth up the gift that is in him by virtue of the baptismal laver, and the laying on of hands. Hence it is also called, a “confidence towards God^d”; and, by our Church^e, a “knowing and feeling that “there is none other name under heaven given unto man, “whereby we can be saved, but only the name of our “Lord Jesus Christ.” Yea, it is that blessed testimony,*

^c Heb. xi. 1, &c.
the sick.

^d 1 John iii. 21.

^e Office for
which

which the Spirit of God beareth with our spirit, that we are the children of God^f.

To confirm us in this most useful doctrine (but not sufficiently adverted to) of the two-fold acceptation of faith, we have it often exemplified to us in the New Testament. But the two following instances are very clear and express.

In the account given by St. John^g of the Samaritan's believing in Christ, we read, " Many believed on him, " for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told " me all that I did."——But, as it follows, " Many " more believed on him, because of his own word, and " said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of " thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves."

In Acts the viiith we meet with a parallel case: " Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached " Christ unto them: And when they believed Philip " preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, " and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both " men and women; and great joy was in that city."—Here we see, assent, or the historical faith, preceded baptism; great joy, or the experimental and efficacious faith, succeeded it.

Whoso is desirous to improve this sentiment may consult the profound Dr. Jackson; who, in treating of experiments in ourselves, descants on the case of Naaman, and others, to the same effect, vol. I. p. 140, &c.

^f Rom. viii. 10.

^g Chap. iv.

The Eleventh SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

2 KINGS, Chap. v.

1. *N*OW Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria:—

*G*OD is the true and only fountain of honour. Naaman had been his instrument in delivering Syria; and therefore was a great man with his master, and honourable. It was his success gave him favour and interest with his king; that favour gave him honour; but God was the sole author of that success.—God is the first and only cause of all our blessings; and therefore principally to be honoured and adored.

—*He was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.*

No distemper incident to our body is so filthy and loathsome as leprosy; yet this great, this honourable, man is afflicted with it.—

Human greatness cannot secure us from the common infirmities of human nature.—Here was valour, dignity, and renown, but qualified with a nauseous disease; but this was to prevent the more noisome leprosy of pride. Here was an odious and vile distemper, but alleviated by the glory of victory and fame.—Thus Divine Providence tempers his blessings to secure their better effect: He keeps our joys and our fears on an even balance, that we may neither presume nor despair. By such compositions God is pleased to make both our crosses more tolerable, and our enjoyments more wholesome and safe.

This

2. *And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid, and she waited on Naaman's wife.*

This example, like many others in Scripture-history, teaches us, that those things, which are looked upon in the world as the pure effects of chance, are, in truth, the operations of an eternal

and all-wise Providence, which presides over all, and often draws the greatest advantages from the most common and ordinary occurrences.—A party of *Syrians* had made an inroad into the land of *Israel*; had brought away, among the captives, a *little maid*; they sold her; she became a slave to a great lord of *Syria*, and waits on his lady.—What was there extraordinary in all this? may a natural man say.—But if we regard this (or the parallel history of *Joseph*) with a spiritual eye, how plainly does the hand of infinite Wisdom and Goodness appear, in directing and conducting this seeming chance to the greatest good! Not only the cure of *Naaman's* leprosy, but the health of his soul, in the cure of his idolatry, and ignorance of the true God, is effected by the means of this *little maid*:—A poor slave brings salvation to this great man's house! Thus a small chink may let in great light; and very slender beginnings have often given birth to the most considerable events. For this reason little things are not to be despised; because, in the weakness of worldly causes, we see, most clearly, the superior wisdom and omnipotence of GOD, who often “chuses the foolish things of the world, on purpose to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty, &c.^h”

3. *And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet*

This, as bishop *Hall* descants, was a true daughter of *Abraham*: Tho' she had lost her liberty, she lost not

^h 1 Cor. i. 27.

that is in Samaria; for he would recover him of his leprosy. her faith: She knew, and believed, there was a God in Israel, whose prophet had

power to work the miraculous cure. Nor had her captivity imbittered her spirit towards the family she served. Tho' deprived by them of her freedom, tho' her person was enslaved, yet her mind, and her charity, were free. Her good will to her master appears in her good wishes: She spends none on herself: We hear her not pining after home; she wishes not herself, but her master, in *Samaria*, and that for the benefit of a cure. She is more solicitous for his good, than her own release. — A noble generosity! a most disinterested benevolence! How few servants, how few friends, are there now a-days, who follow this rare and excellent example! How few Christian servants so faithful to their Christian masters, as this *Jew*, this little slave, to her heathen lord!

4. *And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.*

By the general concern expressed by all *Naaman's* servants for their lord's welfare and recovery (as first, in the little maid's wish; then another servant's readiness to report what she said; and afterwards (ver. 13.) the reasonable advice of his attendants to comply with the prophet's order), we have reason to judge him happy in the love and fidelity of his domesticks; and may also presume this happiness was the consequence of some virtues, which endeared him so much to his family. — For otherwise, as the poet observes, "Nor wife nor child will for your welfare care¹." — The affection of masters and servants ought to be reciprocal. For the only sure bond and cement of domestic peace and happiness, is a mutual benevolence, and a

¹ Horace. *Non uxor saluum te vult, non filius.*

faithful

faithful discharge of our respective duties towards each other.

5. *And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold^{*}, and ten changes of raiment.*

6. *And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayst recover him of his leprosy.*

To obviate all imputation of credulity in *Naaman*, or the king, it is necessary and natural to suppose there were many more particular circumstances than are here related; such as *Naaman's* discouraging the maid; hearing from her the relation of *Elisha's* many wonderful miracles; his reporting these things to the king (at this time *Benbadad*, who had been himself a prisoner in *Israel*, and might very probably have heard of the prophet's fame); and, above all, the special work of God's spirit,

in disposing both *Naaman* and the king to give ear to the words of a simple maiden, and to believe her report. These reasonable presumptions will secure the credibility of the history; and then, if, with *St. Ambrose*, we penetrate into the allegory, 'tis obvious to remark how lively an emblem and type this was of that ready faith, which the Gentile world, even kings

* The Syrian talent was 46 l. 17 s. 6 d. of our money; at which computation, ten talents made

l. s. d.
468 15 0

The 6000 pieces of gold made 1000 drachms, and a drachm was as much as an Hungarian ducat; which, in our money, is 7 s. 6 d. The piece of gold then, being 1 s. 3 d. each, the whole 6000 amounted to

375 0 0

So that the whole present, exclusive of the ten changes of raiment made

843 15 0

and their princes, should yield to the Gospel in the first and earliest ages of Christianity. The Church was then, like this *little maid*, small, and of no reputation; young, a captive, and in a state of servitude. — On the other hand, as *Naaman* takes with him great presents, and the king writes a letter by him, &c. so we find, that worldly men, and such whose faith is weak and imperfect, have always recourse to worldly means to accomplish their ends; even in spiritual things, and the concerns of religion. Howbeit, when this flows from a pious, but uninstructed, zeal, God, though he rejects the means, accepts the ready mind: For so the prophet, tho' he refuses *Naaman's* present, yet (ver. 19.) dismisses him with the valediction of *peace*, and sends him away with a blessing.

7. *And it came to pass when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his cloaths, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.*

The wicked fear, where no fear is: Nor are they capable, in any emergency, of raising their thoughts above the pitch of natural causes. The king of *Israel* (who then reigned) had forsaken the true God; and therefore never thought of his almighty power, nor of his prophet. For this reason he cannot read the letter, without amazement of

heart, without rending his cloaths, and crying out, *Am I God*, &c. He was not indeed so infatuated (like later princes, who idolized themselves) as to fancy himself a God; and in this his modesty deserves some praise. For although God vouchsafes to call kings gods, it best becomes kings to call themselves men; and to disdain all flattering titles from others, lest they meet with the fate of *Herod*¹, and,

¹ *Acts* xii.

by the remarkableness of their destruction confess the distance wherein they stand to their Maker.—Man may *kill*, but man cannot *make alive* again. And if leprosy be a death (as it is here and elsewhere ^m intimated to be, *i. e.* an incurable disease), what human power can either inflict or cure it? This was the sum of the king's argument; and, if the reasoning be attended to, it must lead us to the acknowledgment of the divine power of Christ. The voice of natural reason will dictate this truth, That he who cures a leprosy by his word, can be no other than God.—*Elisha*, as the servant of God, sends the leper to the waters of *Jordan*; but our Lord cured that disease with a touch, by a word, by his will: “I will, saith he, be thou clean; and immediately his leprosy was cleansed ⁿ.”

8. *And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his cloaths, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy cloaths? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.*

9. *So Naaman came with his horses, and with his chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.*

One thing we may plainly observe in this incident, is, the difference between the civil and ecclesiastical power; between the regal, and the pontificate; the king, and the church: The temporal authority extends only to temporal things, and interposes (of right) no farther in spirituals than the external government of the Church, and its ministers. But as to the power and office of the clergy, tho'

in point of outward discipline, and for the sake of regularity and order, they are, and ought to be, subject to the civil magistrate; yet, in the exercise of their function, and all acts purely spiritual, they are wholly independent on the state. The king of *Israel* was conscious he was no prophet; that he had no supernatural powers; therefore *rents his*

^m Numb. xii. 12.

ⁿ Matt. viii. 9.

cloaths, and complains of mal-treatment, when applied to in a matter that belonged not to his province. But *Elisha*, who was duly invested with those supernatural powers, desires the case might be turned over to him. The king sends the leper to the prophet to be healed; that was all he could do. It is the prerogative and honour of the regal office to maintain and defend the Church; to point out, by their laws, which is the true; together with the way, and the guides, that lead thereto; but to admit into this heavenly kingdom, to make us members of Christ by baptism, and cure the leprosy of sin, is a privilege that belongs only to the priestly office.

10. *And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean.*

The number of *seven*, as interpreters observe, is often mystical in the Scripture-language: Here *Elisha* bids *Naaman* go and wash in *Jordan seven times*. This number denoting perfection, either signifies the perfect cleanness he should obtain, both in flesh and in spirit; or it may allude to, and typify, the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Ghost, which the waters of baptism are to fit and prepare us for; or the sevenfold corruption of sin, which they are intended to cleanse us from.—And as pride is the first of all the deadly sins, and source of all the rest, the prophet takes a proper course to mortify that vice, without which the waters of *Jordan*, the baptismal font, can be of little use.—*Elisha* therefore takes state upon him, that he may humble the proud *Syrian*: He doth not say, as the great man expected he would, *I will come to him*; but, *Let him come to me*. And yet, when he comes to the prophet's door, he vouchsafes not to see him.—This had proved too hard a trial for *Naaman*, had he listened only to the advice of pride: Had pride prevailed, he had never been cleansed. But, after much struggle, he humbles himself to the voice of the

the prophet; he wisely submits to the prudent counsel of his own servants, and finds a cure in the conquest of his pride.—In this procedure we may also observe, the prophet acted as the type and representative of Christ, who sends all that are yet without the pale of his Church, to the waters of baptism: none must come within his gates, until they *wash* and are clean.—*Naaman*, with his horses and his chariot, stood at the door of the house of *Elisha*; he might not enter.—No human grandeur, no wealth nor honours, no worldly considerations, nor means whatsoever, but baptism, shall procure admission into the house and family of Christ.—“He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved.” And, “Except a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot ENTER into the kingdom of God.”

On the behaviour of *Naaman*,

11. But *Naaman* was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

12. Are not *Abana* and *Pharpar*, rivers of *Damascus*, better than all the waters of *Israel*? may I not wash in them and be clean? so he turned, and went away in a rage.

13. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some

man, before and after his washing, we have already noted the two kinds of faith observable in his case. Here, if we take it in another light, we may as clearly discern the different workings of the flesh and the spirit; of nature and grace. Natural men look no further than natural causes: They see not, nor expect any other effects, than what the ordinary course and event of things are wont to produce. Their views reach no higher than to second causes; the first cause of all things, they want both eyes and light to see; namely, the eye of

° Mark xvi. 16.

° John iii. 5.

great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?

faith, and the illumination of the Holy Ghost: They see the creature only; the Creator they see not; and nature is their only rule.

This is that philosophy, which the apostle deservedly calls vain¹. How right soever philosophy may be in defining the operations of nature, it is stark blind as to those of grace; therefore vain and unprofitable, if it proceed no further than its own power and extent. The wisdom of this world is but a false or incompetent guide in heavenly things: it treats with contempt the superior efficacies of grace; or thinks itself affronted, when any thing is offered that is above its sphere: It is *wroth*, and *turns away in a rage* from the prophet, that recommends any spiritual matter; and rejects all, as foolish and impertinent, which suits not with its own prejudicate opinions.—This is what the men of the world, the fine *Athenian* wits of the age, call reason: This is what they stick to: And this attachment is the great stumbling-block and rock of offence, at which they stumble, when the doctrines of faith are proposed to them.—But if the conduct of *Naaman*, before his washing, represent to us the common practice of all carnal men; the example of his better advised obedience, and the happy fruit of it, should convince them of the folly of such behaviour, and that the wisdom of this world is indeed, what the Apostle calls it, but “foolishness with God¹.” That we must therefore first become fools, in going counter to the mere reason of man, in the great mysteries of faith, if we would be truly wise.

14. *Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of*

How apposite an emblem this is of the Christian baptism, hath been observed more than once. We shall therefore only note the un-

¹ Col. ii. 8.

¹ 1 Cor. i. 25.

God: and his flesh came again, like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

happy prejudice of those, who under the full light of the Gospel, reject or neglect the inestimable benefits of this divine institution. To

this purpose our Lord applies this miraculous cure of a heathen and stranger, and remarks the great blindness and perverseness of those *Jews*, who remained refractory and insensible to all the offers of his grace, while others who were as aliens (the publicans and sinners) came in, and took, as it were, the kingdom of heaven by violence. "Many lepers," saith he, "were in *Israel*, in the time of *Eliseus*, the prophet, and none of them were cleansed, saving *Naaman the Syrian*."—Hence it likewise follows, as St. *Ambrose* remarks, that the grace of God is altogether free; that it is due to none; much less tied to a place, or any natural relation; but is dispensed only to the good disposition of the will, and the sincerity of the heart.

15. *And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.*

16. *But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it, but he refused.*

Gratitude is a most natural virtue, a most rational duty, and ought to bear proportion to the favour received. Yet nothing is rarer to be found, especially towards God; and that, too often, among those who are of the household of faith. Of ten lepers, whom our Lord cured, but one returned to acknowledge his cure, and give glory to God; and he was a stranger. And here, a *Syrian* stranger is thankful for his double cure, his leprosy and idolatry; but we hear not of one *Israelite*

* Luke iv. 27.

profited by the miracle, or the example.—Not even the prophet's own servant.—On the contrary, we may rather observe, whom mercy and pardon of sin does not melt into thankfulness and praise, it commonly hardens. They, to whom much is forgiven, will indeed love much; but then they must first have been sensible how much their guilt was, before they can feelingly know the greatness of the mercy.—Humility must shew us the one, and faith will shew the other.—Both these must go together, otherwise we shall never be truly thankful.—In a word, he cannot be thankful to God, who is not truly penitent.

17. *And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering, nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD.*

18. *In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.*

19. *And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.*

In this request of *Naaman*, we see in him a thorough conviction of the unlawfulness of idolatry, and a good intention to worship none but the true God. His desire of *Israelitish* earth for erecting his altar upon, testified the one, and his petition to be excused when he went with his master *into the house of Rimmon*, proved the other. At the same time there is a weakness of faith discernable in both these requests (as expositors observe); but as the prophet doth not condemn it, neither ought we.—The prophet's answer, *Go in peace*, and our Lord's saying, on a like occasion, "New wine is not to be put into old bottles, &c." shews, that indulgence should be used to-

^c *Matt. ix. 17.*

wards young converts. If the intention be sincere, the same God, who touched the heart with the love of truth, will by degrees, and in due time, lead them into all truth. "No man is made a saint at once. Both the natural and spiritual growth advances to perfection by degrees.—The modern doctrine of instantaneous perfection is an absurdity, both in nature and grace.

20. *But Gehazi the servant of Elisha the man of God said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.*

21. *So Gehazi followed after Naaman: and when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well?*

22. *And he said, All is well: my master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.*

23. *And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and*

In this action of *Gebazi*, and the punishment than attended it, we may learn in general the nature and effect of that sort of covetousness which is properly called avarice, or the love of money.—As the heart is, such are the manners.—The prophet looked with contempt and indifference on the Syrian's wealth; *Gebazi* with admiration, and a greedy eye. The prophet refuses a present, that he may do the greater honour to God and his religion: *Gebazi* thinks of nothing but himself, and his own interest, of *olive-yards and vineyards, &c.* And as the miser thinks not of God, no wonder he forgets that God sees and observes him. He can lie, and swear too [*As the LORD liveth*], to gain his knavish ends, without the least thought, that the God he swears by, hears his false oath, and will avenge the fraud.—Avarice never lodges

laid them upon two of his servants, and they bare them before him.

24. *And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house; and he let the men go, and they departed.*

25. *But he went in, and stood before his master: and Elisba said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.*

26. *And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee: is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants?*

27. *The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.*

lodges alone in any heart: All the posse of sins that can serve its turn are ever present and attendant upon it. First *Gebazi* breaks the tenth commandment; immediately we find him breaking all the rest. Both the tables of the law are sacrificed to his accursed desire of wealth: So that in him we see that saying verified, "The love of money is the root of all evil."—The judgment, which fell upon him for his wickedness, ought to warn us, not only of the curse, which cleaves to ill-gotten gain, and commonly descends from parents to their children; and above all, of the Divine vengeance, which pursues all those, especially, who, for filthy lucre-sake, bring a slander and reproach upon religion; but also it teaches us this terrible lesson, that every wilful and presumptuous sin, and more especially all covetous practices of fraud and injustice, robs us of all the benefit of our baptismal

purgation (when we expressly renounced the pomps and vanities of the world), and casts us back again into that state of nature, pollution, and death, "from whence we were once clean escaped, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." To every such apostate from grace, it is still

still said, by the just sentence of God, as it was said to Gehazi, *The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to thee, and to thy seed (i. e. to all such as thee), for ever.* So that "it happens to them, according to the true
 " proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit
 " again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." 2 Pet. ii. 22.





The Eleventh SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

2 KINGS, Chap. ix.

Divine Vengeance, though slow, yet sure. This verified in the history of the destruction of Ahab's family by Jehu: And the downfall of pride, in the tragical end of Jezebel.

1. *AND Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loyns, and take this box of oyl in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead.*

2. *And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber.*

3. *Then take the box of oyl, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed*

WE read before, 1 Kings xix. 15, &c. that God commanded *Elijah* to anoint *Hazael* to be king of Syria, *Jehu* to be king of Israel, and *Elisha* to be prophet in his room.—

Of these three commands, *Elijah* executed but one, and that the last; namely, he appointed *Elisha* to succeed himself; but, in so doing, he, in effect, executed all the rest. What by him was left undone, was perfected by *Elisha*, who inherited the same spirit and power. But even *Elisha* anointed not *Jehu* in person, but by a proxy:

A

thee king over Israel: then open the door, and flee, and tarry not.

A special messenger was sent, to whom he delegated that power and commission: This teaches us in general, that the power and authority lodged in the Church by the Holy Ghost, is still the same, though vested in different hands. Persons may, and must change, by reason of mortality, or other natural impediments; but the power and office remains.—Thus the apostles of Christ derived their power from him, as he did from his Father, and then committed the same to other faithful men. So that still, through all the successions of men and times, from that first constitution of the Christian clergy (who are the prophets of the gospel) the power continues the very same. And herein also is verified, that saying of our Lord's, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." *Matt. xxviii. 20.*

4. *So the young man, even the young man the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead.*

5. *And when he came, behold, the captains of the host were sitting; and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of all us? And he said, To thee, O captain.*

6. *And he arose, and went into the house, and he poured the oyl on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, even over Israel.*

The severe judgment here pronounced against *Abab* and his house, had been denounced before by *Elijah* (1 Kings xxi. 21.); and is now to be executed in full measure, because that family did not take warning and repent. Thus God suffereth long, and is kind;—in forbearing he waits to be gracious. But if the wicked will not turn from his evil way, when he has been warned, repeatedly warned, divine justice will not be mocked; God will whet his sword, he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.—By his sparing *Abab*, on his outward, though not genuine,

124 *The Eleventh* SUNDAY 2 Kings 9.

7. *And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel.*

8. *For the whole house of Ahab shall perish, and I will cut off from Ahab, him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel.*

9. *And I will make the house of Ahab, like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, the son of Abijah.*

10. *And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled.*

11. *Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord, and one said unto him, Is all well? wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? And he said unto them, Ye know the man, and his communication.*

12. *And they said, It is false, tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel.*

genuine, humiliation, and suspending the punishment so long, we are taught how ready and desirous God is to pardon and forgive the greatest of sinners, if they repent: But if they do not, the judgment that has been deferred, will fall so much the heavier.

This mad fellow.] The operations of the Spirit, though not real frenzy, yet are so different from those of nature, and the ways of the world, and especially of ill men, such as these idolaters were, it is no wonder they counted the prophet a madman. So David saith, "He was become a monster unto many." So our Lord was thought to be "beside himself," (*Mark iii.*

21.) and every religious and spiritual Christian is now-a-days reckoned a fool and a madman, for adhering, with any strictness, to the rules and discipline of an holy life, which are so contrary to the fashions of a wicked and profane world.

13. *They then basted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king.*

14. *So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, conspired against Joram: (Now Joram had kept Ramoth-gilead, he and all Israel, because of Hazael king of Syria:*

Jehu is king.] The Hebrew is, *Jehu reigneth*; the Church renders it, *is king*. To reign then, and to be a king, are synonymous terms, and bear a sense equivalent to each other.—This is Christian politics; this the doctrine of Scripture, and of our Church in particular; that the *regnant* king is the power ordained of God, because he is the “power in being”

(Rom. xiii. 1.) The steps by which such become invested with the right of divine government, are generally the same, in effect, with what happened to *Jehu*.—First, God’s designation, signified by the prophet’s anointing.—Secondly, The party designed, accepting the office.—Thirdly, The people’s recognizing and proclaiming him, according to what we read in this verse, *They basted, &c. and blew with the trumpet, saying, Jehu is king.*—This indeed, in the next verse, is called *conspiring* against *Joram*; and so it was: And if *Jehu* took the crown on any other views, than in pure obedience to God’s will, and as his minister, he was no doubt guilty of treason, notwithstanding the divine message and anointing. How much more guilty are they, who not only without any divine commission, but on the mere impulse of pride and ambition, conspire against the powers in being.—But if it be enquired, What are the people to do, when (by the best evidences that can be obtained of God’s will) the divine right of government appears to be actually transferred from one king to another?—Surely, to follow the example of *Jehu’s* followers, and submit to the change as to the ordinance of God.—Resist *until* it be established, we may; to resist *after* a due establishment, is what is threatened with the penalty of damnation,

nation, *Rom. xiii.* This seems the firmest basis of government, and the surest rule of allegiance and loyalty.

15. But king Joram was returned to be healed in Jezreel, of the wounds which the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria.) And Jehu said, If it be your minds, then let none go forth nor escape out of the city, to go to tell it in Jezreel.

16. So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel, (for Joram lay there) and Abaziah king of Judah was came down to see Joram.

17. And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company. And Joram said, Take an horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, Is it peace?

18. So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? And Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me, and the watchman told, saying, the messenger came to them, but he cometh not again.

Observe we here, in the story of Joram's rash conduct and unhappy fate, the unerring superintendency of divine providence, the veracity of God's word, the exact measures of his justice, and most punctual accomplishment of his will, in every the minutest circumstance both of time and place.—It was not chance, but the over-ruling power of heaven, that directed this whole transaction; that sent Jehu, that brought Joram to that very *plat*, which had been decreed to be the place of execution.—The purchase of Ahab's covetousness and murder, was the theatre of his punishment, and of his son's death.—This Jehu called to mind, and remembered, as the burden laid upon Ahab, *I will requite thee in this plat, saith the Lord.* Had Joram remembered, or minded, that prophecy, he might have escaped.—There is no way to prevent the stroke of divine justice, but by taking heed to the word of God, and a timely repentance.

19. Then

19. Then he sent out a second on horseback, which came to them, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it peace? And Jehu answered, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me.

20. And the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again: and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimsbi; for he driveth furiously.

21. And Joram said, Make ready. And his chariot was made ready. And Joram king of Israel, and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite.

22. And it came to pass when Joram saw Jehu, that he said Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts are so many?

23. And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah.

24. And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot.

25. Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember, how that when I and thou rode together after Abab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him.

26. Surely, I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, said the LORD, and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the LORD.

27. But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden-house: and Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot: And they did so, at the going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam: and he fled to Megiddo, and died there.

This account of the violent untimely end of Ahaziah, confirms the observation made on 1 Kings xxii. ver. 1, &c. That exterminating judgments are the usual consequences of marriages, or alliances, contracted with ungodly persons.— This was expressly forbidden by

228 *The Eleventh* SUNDAY 2 Kings 9.

28. *And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his sepulchre with his fathers in the city of David.*

29. *And in the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab, began Ahaziah to reign over Judah.*

—See more on our next Sunday Lesson, chap. x. ver. 12.

30. *And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.*

31. *And as Jehu entred in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?*

32. *And he lift up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side, who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs.*

33. *And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down; and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot.*

34. *And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a kings daughter.*

by the law of God (see Deut. vii. 3.) And the unhappy effects which our Lessons, about this time, set before us in the history of Ahab, and the intermarriage of the king of Judah's family, with that impious house, do abundantly testify; yet who lays it to heart?

The casting down of Jezebel, out of her own window, into the street, her being trampled under foot, and devoured of dogs, is not only a lively emblem of the downfall of pride, but a standing monument of God's particular hatred of this sin; and of that eternal truth, which our Lord teaches us, in the Gospel for this day, —“ He that exalteth himself shall be abased.” No eminence of station can privilege pride, nor prevent its fall.—The manner of this queen's fate teaches us also, what should make every proud heart tremble to think of, that the more eminent our condition, or state, is in this world, the more terrible and shameful, as well as great, will be the fall of pride.—The casting her down, out of her own window,

35. *And they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.*

36. *Wherefore they came again, and told him: and he said, This is the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezebel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel:*

37. *And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field, in the portion of Jezebel, so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.*

dow, and by her own servants, shews the nature of it, that it is indeed a deadly sin, and most commonly brought to destruction, by its own lusts.—But the trampling of her underfoot, by her own subjects, and the devouring of her by dogs, is a fearful presage of that curse, which shall be the portion of the proud in the next world.—One extreme misery of hell is, the inversion of all order: This curse will fall most sensibly on the proud: The higher they were advanced in life, the lower then will be their casting down. The greatest then shall be the least; the highest, shall be the most low, most despised, most scorned, and insulted, by men and devils; their slaves shall then be exalted above them, and tread them under foot; the dogs, that is, the most abject, and most malicious, shall come about them, and tear them in pieces, while there is none to help.—This is the fate of pride, which exposes to the hatred of God, and contempt of men.—But what shall we say to Jezebel's painting and dressing herself out at such a time? Did she expect to charm Jehu with her beauty, or awe him with her finery? The upbraiding speech she made him, *Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?* was too provoking to merit any favour from him: And paint, on an old face, serves only to make it the more hideous and deformed.—Will the infidel say, It was magnanimous and great, in an article of such danger, to shew so little concern, and with more than female courage, a spirit worthy of a queen, to maintain her

130 *The* Eleventh SUNDAY, &c. 2 Kings 9.

character to the last, and appear undaunted at the presence of death? — Let who will admire such courage: The believer, who knows there is a just and holy God, trembles at such intrepidity, as the effect of a desperate obduracy of heart, a seared conscience, a stupid insensibility. — What can be more horrid than to die impenitent, and to out-brave damnation? What can be a more desperate case, except it be hell itself, to which it inevitably consigns? — And this is another fatal effect of pride, that it not only provokes the justice of God, but despises and rejects his mercy. — *Abab* had some relentings of heart, and was indulged a reprieve for life; his wife, as more proud, scorned to submit, bore it out to the last, and met with an exit suitable to her crimes.





The Twelfth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

2 KINGS, Chap. x.

P R E F A C E.

***T**HIS Lesson relates the final excision of Ahab's family, according to the prophecies foregoing; and therein teaches us the certainty and severity of Divine Justice, which, early or late, will take hold of all impenitent sinners; and often extends to their posterity, especially when their crimes have been notorious, and oppressive: That enormous wickedness proves oftentimes its own avenger; and that matching into ungodly families is generally attended with unhappiness.—In Jehu we behold that kind of partial obedience, which is too common in the world, even among religious persons:—A great zeal to punish the faults of others; but as great remissness in correcting our own.*

The Twelfth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

2 KINGS, Chap. x.

1. *AND Abab had seventy sons in Samaria: and Juda wrote letters, and sent to Samaria, unto the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to them that brought up Ababs children, saying,*

2. *Now assoon as this letter cometh to you, seeing your masters sons are with you, and there are with you chariots and horses, a fenced city also, and armour:*

3. *Look even out the best and meetest of your masters sons, and set him on his fathers throne, and fight for your masters house*

symptoms of repentance, are not rejected of thee: The bruised reed, and smoking flax, shall stay thy hand awhile; for thou waitest to be gracious.— But justice will not always be mocked: Whom mercy, by sparing, does not reform, judgment, without mercy, shall finally destroy.

4. *But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, Behold, two kings stood not be-*

THE time was now come that the sentence of God's judgment should be executed on the wicked Abab and his posterity.—

It had been respited during his own life, in regard to that humiliation he had shewn on the hearing it denounced (1 Kings xxi. 27.), but is now inflicted, in full weight, by the hand of Jehu, who slew all that remained of the house of Abab, until he left him none remaining.

—How terrible, and yet how forbearing, are thy judgments, O God! The slenderest motions of godly sorrow, and most imperfect

In these rulers, and their putting to death the children of Abab, whom they had under their charge, we can-

fore him: how then shall we stand?

5. And he that was over the house, and he that was over the city, the elders also, and the bringers up of the children, sent to Jehu, saying, *We are thy servants, and will do all that thou shalt bid us; we will not make any king: do thou that which is good in thine eyes.*

6. Then he wrote a letter the second time to them, saying, *If ye be mine, and if ye will hearken unto my voice, take ye the heads of the men your masters sons, and come to me to Jezreel by to-morrow this time (now the kings sons being seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, which brought them up).*

7. And it came to pass when the letter came to them, that they took the kings sons, and slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent him them to Jezreel.

employ such persons, as the fittest instruments to effect their wicked and unjust designs, may expect to receive the like return; evil agents being often permitted of God to visit the mischief they were set to do, on the head of those who employed them.—Observe we likewise the vanity and folly of accumulating wealth by unrighteous ways and means.—*Naboth's*

cannot but see the hand of Divine retributive justice: These were the men who, thro' fear of wicked Jezebel, had condemned and stoned the innocent Naboth: These are now the executioners of God's vengeance for that barbarous murder, on the devoted family of Abab.—But in neither of these actions were they governed by conscience, or the fear of God: They were moved only by the fear of man.—*We will do all that thou shalt bid us*, say these men. They are alike disposed to execute the good or bad laws of their new king.—Such *active* obedience to the will of any prince, such *illimited* submission, is inconsistent with the duty we owe to God. But none are so fit for wicked and bloody work, as wicked and bloody men. God indeed often employs such instruments, as he does the evil angels, to be the ministers and executioners of his justice; but those men who

vineyard proved a canker to the rest of *Abab's* substance; like the lean kine of *Pbaraob*, it swallowed up all the fat ones, and destroyed that unhappy king, with all his family.—We herein also see the truth of that saying, “He that buildeth his house by iniquity, “is like a man that gathereth himself stones for the “tomb of his burial.”—By the means of a wicked letter was *Naboth* put to death; by the like means is effected the destruction of *Abab*, and his posterity.

8. *And there came a messenger and told him, saying, They have brought the heads of the kings sons. And he said, Lay ye them in two heaps at the entering-in of the gate until the morning.*

9. *And it came to pass in the morning, that he went out, and stood, and said to all the people, Ye be righteous: behold, I conspired against my master, and slew him: but who slew all these?*

10. *Know now that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spake concerning the house of Abab: for the LORD hath done that which he spake by his servant Elijah.*

11. *So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Abab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolks,*

That the hand of God might the more visibly appear in this dreadful judgment, *Jehu* commands the heads of the seventy young princes to be laid at the city gates, and exposed in the most public manner; that so, all being struck with so horrible a spectacle, might revere the justice, and confess the truth, of God, who had denounced this judgment: As well as be himself acquitted, in the eye of the world, from the imputation of any private revenge or cruelty, in the execution of it. And as this ought to be a warning to princes against encouraging irreligion and vice among their subjects, lest they prepare a scourge for themselves, and pave the way for their own destruction; so we may all learn how little it avails to

^a *Ecclus. xxi. 8.*

and his priests, until he left him none remaining.

have a numerous issue, large dependencies, mighty wealth, or even royal power itself, without virtue, and the blessing of God.—When sin gets possession of the throne, it spreads its poison far and near; it soon blasts the fairest hopes, overturns the strongest foundations, and brings down the proudest tyrant to the ground.—So true is that saying of the Wise man, “He that pursueth evil, pursueth it to “his own death^b.”

12. And he arose and departed, and came to Samaria. And as he was at the shearing-house in the way,

13. Jehu met with the brethren of Abaziah king of Judah, and said, Who are ye? And they answered, We are the brethren of Abaziah, and we go down to salute the children of the king, and the children of the queen.

14. And he said, Take them alive. And they took them alive, and slew them at the pit of the shearing-house, even two and forty men; neither left he any of them.

That the brethren of Abaziah should, at so critical a juncture, fall in Jehu's way, and be ignorant of the fate of Abaziah, and of those they were going to salute, was another remarkable act of Divine Providence, which gathered, as it were, together all that bore any relation to Abab; that they also might meet the doom pronounced against that whole family. These young princes were not strictly brethren, but kinsmen, of Abaziah; and related to the house of Abab by that unhappy alliance made with his family, by the marriage of his sister Atbaliab to the king of Judah (chap. viii. 26.).—So

fatal is it to match into wicked and ungodly families.—Ruin, destruction, and a curse, are the usual dowries which such wives as Jezebel and Atbaliab bring with them, and entail upon their posterity. Nevertheless, tho' nothing is of greater concern in life than

^b Prov. xi. 19.

the establishment of families, nor any thing more desired, yet nothing is generally less minded by parents, in the disposal of their children, than the virtue and piety of the stock into which they ingraft and marry them. Interest and riches are thought the only considerable things : Religion is but seldom regarded as any (tho' the chief) ingredient of happiness. No wonder then to find happy marriages so very rare and uncommon ; and so many noble families, some quite extinct, others sinking into decay.

15. *And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him, and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right as my heart is with thy heart ? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thy hand : and he gave him his hand, and he took him up to him into the chariot.*

16. *And he said, Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD : so they made him ride in his chariot.*

17. *And when he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah.*

Rechab was descended from *Jethro* the father-in-law of *Moses* ; and being a person eminent for his piety and great strictness of life, gave name to the *Rechabites*, of whom the prophet *Jeremiah* makes mention (ch. xxxv.) His son *Jehonadab* ; here spoken of, was he that prescribed that ascetic and severe life to his children, and descendants, “ Never to

“ drink wine, nor build “ house, &c.”—The constant and strict observance of this their ancestor's command, is highly commended of God by the prophet, as a worthy pattern of filial duty and obedience.—The respect wherewith *Jehu* treated *Jehonadab*, and the particular regard he paid to his approbation of the measures he was taking to extirpate idolatry, not only shews the established character of that good man, but sets before us an amiable view of the intrinsic excellence, and real worth, of true virtue ; that it attracts veneration

ration and esteem, even from superiors.—Good men indeed are content with the honour that cometh from God, and need not court the applause of men: It often follows them of its own accord, and without their seeking. But bad men, and hypocrites, are forced to blow their own trumpets: If they do any good thing, they cannot forbear applauding themselves; their piety sets itself off in *Jehu's* vaunting stile, *Come and see my zeal for the Lord*.—But a zeal that calls for witnesses, and proclaims its own praises, has too much ostentation to be sincere.—Whatever rigour such men express against *Abab* and *Baal*, that is to say, against some particular sins, if, with *Jehu*, they spare the *calves in Dan and Beth-el*, that is, if they retain their own favourite vices, it plainly shews, that all their zeal is rather a zeal for themselves, than for the Lord. Whatever they profess in word, their heart (like that of *Jehu*) is not right, ver. 29, &c.

18. And *Jehu* gathered all the people together, and said unto them, *Abab served Baal a little, but Jehu shall serve him much.*

19. Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of *Baal*, all his servants, and all his priests, let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice to do to *Baal*; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live. But *Jehu* did it in subtilty, to the intent that he might destroy the worshippers of *Baal*.

20. And *Jehu* said, Proclaim a solemn assembly for

Some of the antients^c have excused, and even defended, this lie of *Jehu*, on account of the goodness of his intention. But this opinion is strongly opposed, and refuted, by St. *Augustine* (Epist. viii. 9, 19.); where he invincibly proves, that no sort of fiction or lie ought ever to be used: That, to admit it as a thing approved of God, or to justify it on the practice of any good man in scripture, is of dangerous consequence to the truth and authority of the Sacred Writings.—Howbeit others among the primitive

^c *Theodoret, Jerom.*

Baal. And they proclaimed it.

21. *And Jehu sent thro' all Israel, and all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left that came not: and they came into the house of Baal; and the house of Baal was full from one end to another.*

22. *And he said unto him that was over the vestry, Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal. And he brought them forth vestments.*

23. *And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal, and said unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there be here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but the worshippers of Baal only.*

24. *And when they went in to offer sacrifices, and burnt-offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands, escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him.*

25. *And it came to pass as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-*

Christians carried this example of *Jehu* so far, as to take pattern by it in their disputes with heretics, feigning themselves to be of their party in order to discover and confute their erroneous tenets. — But waving the question, whether this was right, or whether *Jehu* was to blame or no; and leaving such things to God, who alone judgeth the heart, let the Gospel be our rule; by which it is plain, that we are “not to do evil, that good may come^d.” This divine precept is a much surer guide, than any human precedent can be. Nevertheless, every fiction is not a lie; nor is every thing to be literally understood, as it is spoken. For instance, in the case of parables, fables, or metaphors, it is sufficient that the moral, or thing intended, be true. — Besides, ironies (of which this declaration of *Jehu* seems to be a sort), as also that advice of *Solomon* to the young man (*Eccles.* xi.), “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, &c.” are known to bear a quite contrary sense to what is literally

^d *Rom.* iii. 8.

offering, that *Jehu* said to the guard, and to the captains, Go in, and slay them, let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword, and the guard and the captains cast them out, and went to the city of the house of *Baal*.

26. And they brought forth the images out of the house of *Baal*, and burnt them.

27. And they brake down the image of *Baal*, and brake down the house of *Baal*, and made it a draught-house unto this day.

28. Thus *Jehu* destroyed *Baal* out of *Israel*.

our grand exemplar; and we are to be followers of others, no further than they are of him. So the apostle advises (1 Cor. xi. 1.) "Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ." The practice therefore of men, how holy soever they be, as St. *Augustine* rightly observes, is not to be transcribed into life, without distinction.

29. Howbeit from the sins of *Jeroboam* the son of *Nebat*, who made *Israel* to sin, *Jehu* departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in *Beth-el*, and that were in *Dan*.

expressed; and such as are deceived thereby, may think their own inadvertency, more than the speaker's design. — The emperor *Constantius* made use of a stratagem somewhat like to this of *Jehu*, to discover and remove all such officers and servants as were heathens, from his court and service. — But we are to consider, that although example be stronger than precept, yet precept is safer to follow than example, as much as the word of God is a surer rule, than the lives or practice of the best of mere men. Christ alone is

Jehu had done well in cutting off the house and posterity of *Abah*, and destroying the worship of *Baal*; yet, as we here read, he departed not from the sin of *Jeroboam*; he continued the same schism and idolatry,

* Non omnia quæ in sanctis viris legimus facta, transferre debemus in mores. Contr. Mend. cap. ix. — See also *Sanderfon. Prælect. de piorum exemplis.*

30. *And the LORD said unto Jebu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.*

31. *But Jebu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel, with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.*

which that king had set up; and for the same political reasons.—The golden calves he worshipped still, in opposition to the express law of God. Whence it plainly appears, that the zeal he boasted of, proceeded not from the love of God, but was the effect of his own private views and worldly interests. This warns us to beware of all self-respect, which ever cramps and depraves our acts of obedience, causing us to do the work of the Lord deceitfully, more for our own sakes, than the

Lord's; employing our utmost vigour in his service, when it is to promote our own private ends; but deserting his cause, when it thwarts our passions, or crosses our ambition.—Howbeit, no good thing that we do shall lose its reward: Nothing shall go unrecompensed that is *right* in the eyes of the Lord. But then the rewards, as well as punishments, of Divine Justice, are commonly in kind, and proportioned to the action.—Here we see *Jebu's* obedience was grounded chiefly on a principle of worldly interest; a worldly crown is therefore awarded him for his service^f. Whence we may likewise observe, that there are two sorts of righteousness; one, external, which good men and hypocrites are equally capable of; the other, internal, which is peculiar to the true servants of God. The righteousness external, is that which *Jebu* exercised in cutting off the house of *Ahab*, and

^f *Pro nonnulla obedientia, quam de domo Ahab omnino delenda pro cupiditate suæ dominationis exhibuit, aliquantam mercedem transitoriam regni temporalis accepit. August.*

abolishing the worship of *Baal*, whereby he executed that which was *right* in the eyes of God; while, at the same time, his chief principle for so doing was to serve the ends of his own ambition.—The interior righteousness is such as was that of *David*, who loved the law of God for its own sake, and its own intrinsic excellence, without regard to any temporal advantages. The reward of the first kind of justice is, like itself, temporal and of this world; so God recompensed the obedience of *Jehu* with the kingdom of *Israel* to him and his heirs *to the fourth generation*: But the reward of internal piety is, like its object, eternal and heavenly. *David* therefore, and all who are after God's own heart, propose no other treasure or happiness to themselves, in this world, or the next, but God alone. And it is the constant thought of every good and truly pious man, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee!"

32. *In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel:*

33. *From Jordan east-ward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer (which is by the river Arnon), even Gilead and Bashan.*

34. *Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?*

35. *And Jehu slept with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria, and Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead.*

36. *And the time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria, was twenty and eight years.*

2 Ps. lxxii.



The Twelfth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

2 KINGS, Chap. xviii.

P R E F A C E.

THIS Lesson (as it were by way of contrast) sets before us the history of Hezekiah's good reign, in opposition to that of Ahaz, and the wicked kings of Israel. He begins it with a reformation of the Church, and total suppression of idolatry: For this, God is pleased to bless him with victory and success; while, at the same time, he scourges the Israelites, who had forsaken his Church, with all the miseries of a foreign invasion, desolation, and captivity. He suffers, indeed, Sennacherib to make an inroad into Hezekiah's dominions, even up to the walls of Jerusalem; but there he puts an hook in his nose, restrains his fury, and turns him back again^a. Thus God is often pleased to shew his people their danger, that so they may the more sensibly feel his goodness, and the mercy of their deliverance.

Upon the whole, we may observe, that the Church of England, by her choice of this Lesson, does very plainly declare her own judgment, That it belongs to kings, and those who are invested with the supreme civil power, to reform the disorders and abuses which have crept into the

^a Ch. xix. 28.; and Isa. xxxvii. 29.

public worship of God: *She arrogates not this power to herself alone, and exclusive of the regal authority, as doth the corrupted church of Rome.*

The captivity of the Ten Tribes, for their irreclaimable schism and idolatry, is a warning to all nations, who persist in their sins without reformation, that God's judgments, though slow, because of his mercy, are yet sure, because of his justice.—Whom his goodness and forbearance cannot reclaim, his vengeance, at length, will assuredly punish.

The Twelfth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

2 KINGS, Chap. xviii.

1. **N**OW it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Abazking of Judah began to reign.

2. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: his mothers name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah.

3. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his Father did.

HIS mother's name was Abi.] Most of the kings of Judah are described by the names of their mothers, as well as fathers: Which is not done without great reason and wisdom. For to this, as one especial cause, may be assigned the character of their good or bad reigns. That the virtuous or vicious lives of children are chiefly imputable to the mother, is intimated to us by the Wise man, Prov. xxix. 15. where he tells us, "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." — Abaz, the father of Hezekiah, had been a most egregious idolator beyond any of his predecessors: The very different character therefore and conduct of the son, we may well

well presume, was owing to the pious education, and orthodox principles, which had been early instilled into him by his mother ^b.

4. *He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nebushtan* ^c.

5. *He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.*

6. *For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses*

7. *And the LORD was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.*

8. *He smote the Philis-*

The first thing *Hezekiah* did, was to restore religion, and the worship of God, to its primitive purity, according to the law. This he did in the *first year* of his reign, yea, the very *first month* of that year.—First, He opened the doors of the house of the Lord, which had been long shut up, and repaired them.—Secondly, He cleansed the temple of all filthiness.—And, Thirdly, He appointed the priests and ministers of God to officiate in their courses.—In *Chronicles*, ch. xxix, xxx, and xxxi, we have a particular and very affecting relation of this whole transaction, and the means used by this pious prince for effecting this reformation; which are therefore very proper and useful to be read, together with our Lesson.—“Now, when all “this was finished” (as the

^b *His mother.*] *Abi* was daughter, or rather grand-daughter, of *Zechariah*, the son of *Jehoiadah* the priest, who was slain by *Joas*, king of Judah, for reproving his wickedness. *Josephus* also saith, It was *Zechariah* of Jerusalem: So that she being descended of a good stock, and a good woman herself, had taken care to give her son a pious education.

^c *Nebushtan:*] i. e. *Brass*, mere brass, now of no virtue, but rather an occasion of scandal and offence, and therefore fit to be abolished.

flines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

history proceeds, chap. xxxi. 1.) “all *Israel* that were pre-
“sent, went out to the cities
“of *Judah*, and brake the
“images in pieces, and threw
“down the high places and altars out of all *Judah* and
“*Benjamin*, in *Ephraim* also and *Manasseh*, until they
“had utterly destroyed them all.”—Then our Lesson
relates what is omitted in *Chronicles*, That *Hezekiah*
brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made;
and the reason is added, *For unto those days the children*
of Israel did burn incense unto it.

We may observe then, that this history not only presents us, in this religious king, with an excellent example of sincere piety, and holy zeal, for the service of God, but an admirable and most instructive model of reformation. And whoever is acquainted with the story of our own reformation in this kingdom, and is a lover of the Church of *England*, cannot but, with great pleasure and delight, reflect on the parallel steps taken by those excellent princes of our nation, King *Edward* and Queen *Elizabeth*; who, copying after the pious *Hezekiah*, restored the purity of religion in this our land, and opened the doors of our Church, after a long night of ignorance, superstition, and idolatry.—Both histories are so alike in the manner and matter of fact, that, if we compare them together, the first will seem a most apposite type of our reformation from the errors and profanations of popery; and our proceedings appear to be a perfect imitation and transcript of *Hezekiah*’s. But let it suffice to instance only in one particular.—The *brasen serpent* had been made by *Moses* himself, even by God’s own command; it had been the instrumental cause of health and life to such as were bitten by fiery serpents; was also, on this account, a sacred type and figure of our crucified Redeemer; consequently, deserved justly some veneration from the *Israelites*. Nevertheless, this very image is broken in pieces by *Hezekiah*, and a name

of odium set upon it; because, however salutary, in its first institution, it had proved to the people in the wilderness, and was still a monument of those miraculous cures; yet had afterwards been abused by their idolatrous posterity to a profane and superstitious use. In like manner, the very cross of Christ, on which the salvation of mankind had been transacted, and, for that reason, was justly held in high veneration by the saints of the most early ages of Christianity, gloried in even by St. *Paul*, revered, and, as it were, carried in the very foreheads of Christians, to distinguish them from unbelievers; yet, in process of time, not only the sign of the cross was greatly abused in the Church of *Rome*, after the superstition of popery had once possessed it, but the very figure and image of the cross was made an object of worship and downright idolatry. For these reasons, our wise reformers, after the example of good *Hezekiah*, abolished all use of crucifixes, and brake in pieces those crosses, which had been erected in churches and elsewhere for idolatrous purposes; that so they might prevent the like superstition for the future; retaining only the sign of it in baptism, according to the xxx. Canon of our Church, and her rubric in the baptismal office concerning the use of the cross.—Herein our reformers followed the pious precedent of *Hezekiah*: And their conduct is clearly justified by the example of that good king, and the express testimony of God himself; who, for this particular action, this destroying the *brazen serpent*, among other acts of reformation, has honoured him with the character of one of the best of all the kings of *Judah*. And this a popish expositor^a doth not scruple to allow as an action truly pious.

We

^a *Popish expositor.*] *Abbe de Sacy* acknowledges, from St. *Augustine*, that this was one of the things, wherein *Hezekiah* outdid *David* himself: “En quoy, selon St. *Aug.* il a meme surpassé le roy *David*, d’avoir mis en pieces le serpent d’airain.”—And if we suppose (as, with great probability, we may), that this history of *Hezekiah*’s

9. *And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah (which was the seventh year of Hoshea, son of Elah king of Israel) that Shalmanezzer king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it.*

10. *And at the end of three years they took it, even in the sixth year of Hezekiah (that is the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel) Samaria was taken.*

11. *And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes:*

12. *Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them.*

ons, and there make us his vassals and slaves. This is the fearful, but certain, consequence of presumptuous sin, and living in the wilful breach of our baptismal vow.

zekiah's reign was written not long after his death, either by *Isaiab*, or some other prophet in those times, when *Manasseh* or *Amon* reigned, then what is affirmed of *Hezekiah*, that none of the kings, who were after him, were like him, it will not necessarily exclude the pious *Josiah*, who might live after the time of writing this history.

We have here the history of the siege and taking of *Samaria* (which was the capital of the kingdom of *Israel*), with an account of the captivity of the Ten Tribes; and the reason assigned, why this judgment befel them, to wit, *Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, &c.* ver. 12.—The case of every Christian, who transgresses his holy covenant, and will not bear nor do the commands of God, is ever the same with these *Israelites*, according to the spiritual sense, which is the sense that chiefly imports us. The enemy of our souls never fails to come up, and lay siege to them, when we forsake God. And, except we repent, and obey the voice of the Lord our God, he is permitted to take our capital, and lay waste our strong places; to lead us away captive into his own dominions,

148 *The Twelfth* SUNDAY 2 Kings 18.

13. *Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.*

14. *And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me, I will bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah, three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold.*

15. *And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the kings house.*

16. *At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.*

from the doors and pillars of the temple.—Even to rob God, to appease our enemies; and to offend our Maker, that we may make friends with the world.

17. *And the king of Assyria sent Tartan, and Rab-saris, and Rab-shakeb from Lachish, to king Hezekiah,*

The rest of this chapter, and the two following, are almost verbatim the same with the xxxvi, xxxvii, xxxviii, and xxxix. Chap. of *Isaiab*. Probably, the writer of the Book of *Kings* took that part of the history out of the prophet; who, having been personally concerned in the transaction, may well be supposed to be the first compiler.

The reflections that offer themselves hereon, may best be referred to next Sunday's Lesson: Only, for our humiliation, it may be proper to observe, how very imperfect the obedience of the greatest saint is, when a sudden and violent temptation comes. We are too apt, on the first assault, not only to repent of our having renounced the world, &c. as *Hezekiah* did of his having rebelled against the king of *Assyria*, but to intrench upon God's sacred rights; and, as he did, to cut off the gold

If (according to the spiritual and mystical sense) the captivity of the Ten Tribes, mentioned before, represent the fate of stubborn and impenitent

with a great host against Jerusalem: and they went up and came to Jerusalem: and when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the high way of the fullers field.

18. And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder.

19. And Rab-shakeb said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

20. Thou sayst (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for the war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

21. Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.

22. But if ye say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God; is not that he whose high

penitent sinners, who are led away captive of the Devil at his will; the case of Hezekiah, and his people, is no less true and significant an emblem of the condition of the good and faithful servants of Christ.—The Assyrian, that is to say, the enemy of our souls (who, in our prophet, is elsewhere called “the rod of God’s anger”) is suffered to come against them with a vast army, even to their very gates: He sends his emissaries to threaten, to blaspheme, and insult their faith and trust in God. But if they keep within their walls, within the holy city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the true Church of Christ, no harm shall come nigh them.—“God is in the midst of them, therefore shall they not be removed.” Their only weapons are prayers and tears;—they need no other: God himself shall fight for them, and send his angel, the holy Jesus, to protect them, and to destroy their enemies.—And this he will do, with a mighty slaughter, if we put our trust in him.

Isaiah x. 5.

places, and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?

23. Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

24. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my masters servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

25. Am I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

26. Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joab, unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language (for we understand it) and talk not with us in the Jews language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

27. But Rabshakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?

The first and most usual stratagem of our spiritual enemies, when they attack the Church, is to work upon the passions, especially of the multitude; to terrify their minds with great swelling words, and fright them into doubts and fears concerning the grounds and sufficiency of their faith.—This is the very artifice of the Romish emissaries, and our present sectaries.—If we desire them calmly to argue the points in debate, by the rule of Scripture, or reason, they cry out so much the louder to the men that sit upon the wall; address themselves to

the illiterate croud; and, by all the arts of sophistry, endeavour to draw them from their steadfastness.—Rabshakeh, though an alien and an enemy to the Jews religion, can yet talk in the Jews language; so can these false Apostles: They know full well, how to apply to the ears of the vulgar; and, by that means,

too often seduce the unlearned, and beguile unstable souls.

28. *Then Rab-shakeb stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria.*

29. *Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand:*

30. *Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.*

31. *Hearken not unto Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern:*

32. *Until I come, and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oyl-olive, and of honey, that ye may live and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah when he*

The wiles of Satan, in tempting souls to sin, and drawing them away from God, are much of the same kind with those which his messengers employ to seduce us from the truth.—In the first place, He persuades them, not to hearken to their teachers; and, if they have any trouble on their mind, that it will be to no purpose to open their grief to the minister, or expect any counsel or comfort from thence.

—In the next place, He tempts *them* to believe “they will never be easy in the ways of religion;” “they will for ever be tormented with fears and scruples;” “that the only way to obtain peace of mind, is to make an agreement with him, and come out to him;” “that is, to be reconciled to him and the world; to come out of, and forsake, the Church; to leave off the means of grace, the rigours of repentance, and all the troublesome restraints of religion.” “That then they shall eat of their own vine, and their own fig-tree, and drink every one the waters of his own cistern,

perswadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us.

“*tern, &c.;*” that is, they shall live in ease and pleasure, enjoy profound peace

and composure of mind, without any terrors of conscience, or sense of sin, until he come, and *take them away, &c.*—And take them away he will, when God is pleased to permit him. He will indeed come, and *take away* the soul of the deluded sinner (after it has enjoyed the deceitful pleasures of sin for a season, or stifled the sense of it by a vain pretence to sinless perfection) to his own dominions. But, alas! how false and delusive are the hopes he feeds them with!—That the land he will carry them to, shall be *like their own land, a land of corn and wine, of bread and vineyards, &c.* The very reverse to this will be the miserable state of those souls, who have suffered themselves to be so beguiled; when in hell they shall lift up their eyes, and find this promised paradise, these flattering hopes, to end in woes that shall never end; in the regions of despair, a land of darkness, and everlasting burnings.

Another artifice of Satan, in betraying unwary souls, is to discourage them from persevering in the ways of holiness, by representing the falls of others, and how unable they were to stand out against him; how many mightier men have been cast down, and forced to yield; that so, by weakening our confidence in God, he may drive us to quit our arms of faith and prayer, and cause us to fall, by our very fear of falling.

33. *Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?*

34. *Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?*

35. *Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?*

36. *But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the kings commandment was, saying, Answer him not.*

The very best precaution that Christians can use, especially those of the laity, when they are tempted by Satan to forsake God, or, by his emissaries, to forsake the Church and the truth, is to *hold their peace*, and make no answer.—This was a wise command of *Hezekiah* to the *Jews*: And this is the wisest advice that pastors can give their people; namely, First, That they be well settled and grounded in their holy faith; then, that they keep within the pale of the Church, and shut their ears to all insinuations to the contrary.—*Eve* was lost by admitting of a parley with Satan.—Nor can any thing be a greater mortification to that angel of pride, than the contempt of not listening to his wiles. Disdain to answer him, you soon put him to flight: Silence baffles his present assault, and discourages him from renewing an attempt, in which he was shamefully foiled.

37. *Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rab-shakeh.*

Happy the Church, happy the state, happy the soul, that has an *Eliakim*, a wise spiritual guide to answer for him!—This is that *Eliakim*, whom the prophet *Isaiab* (chap. xxii. 21.) calls “a father to the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and to the house of *Judah*.”—Such a father of his country is a public blessing. And, when our enemies of any kind, make attempts against us, we may *sit on our wall*, and see what passes, but need not be careful to answer them. If we keep within our walls, that is, within the precincts and communion of our Church, under such guides, such faithful pastors, we cannot but be safe.—Such good men cannot indeed forbear to *rent their clothes*, and to mourn with deep concern, when they hear the sacred name of

154 *The Twelfth SUNDAY, &c.* 2 Kings 18.

of God blasphemed, and his holy religion dishonoured; but they are not terrified with the enemies threats: Nay, they rather encourage themselves the more in God, and hope, the more assuredly, that he will take the matter in hand, and maintain his own cause, even because the foolish people have blasphemed him.—Such mourning proceeds from the love of God, and not from any fear or concern for ourselves; is therefore an holy sorrow, a generous indignation,





The Thirteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

2 KINGS Chap. xix.

P R E F A C E.

“**T**HE fear of man bringeth a snare^a,” saith the Wise man; but, “Whoso trusteth in the Lord, “happy is he^b.” The difference, and inequality, that appears in the conduct of Hezekiah, affords us a remarkable example of both these axioms.—In one and the same person we behold, an instance of that ensnaring fear, and this happy trust: His mean and abject submission to the king of Assyria, as related in the foregoing chapter, and especially the sacrilegious price he paid, to purchase peace, plainly argued too great pusillanimity, for one who professed the true religion, and had the God of Jacob for his refuge. But the measures he now takes, upon the blasphemous message of Sennacherib, is a pattern worthy of imitation: First, He consults the prophet; then, repairs to the temple, and commends the whole affair into the hand of God, in a prayer full of pious zeal, and profound humility.

His message to the prophet is an example and instruction to all that are in trouble, to consult the word

^a Prov. xxix. 25.

^b Ibid. ch. xvi. 20.

of God for advice and relief: His repairing to the house of the Lord, and spreading the blaspheming letter before God, may teach us, that a recourse to prayer, and the public worship of God, is the best security against public evils; especially in a concern of religion, where the honour of God is blasphemed, and his enemies are too mighty for us to deal with: In such an exigence, the most effectual means to prevail against them, is, to commit the whole to God, in devout and humble prayer.

From this part of Hezekiah's example we may also learn, wherein true Christian fortitude consists.—'Tis true he rent his clothes; he covered himself with sackcloth, &c.—And such a conduct may seem, to worldly people, to be a mark of fear and cowardice. But if we consult the same history, as related 2 Chron. xxxii. we there find, that he acted a prudent and courageous, as well as a pious and religious part. It is there said, "He took counsel with his princes;—stopped the waters;—fortified the city;—gathered an army;—set captains of war over the people;—spake comfortably to them, and said, Be strong and courageous, be not afraid, nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him, &c."—This, we must allow, shewed both prudence and courage; but what is further related, and particularly in this Lesson, shews us what was the true ground of courage; it was a firm trust and reliance upon God.—He rent his clothes indeed, and covered himself with sackcloth; but this was to propitiate God, by repentance, for those sins which had provoked the Lord to send so formidable an army against him; and very probably, for his unbecoming fears. The effect of this repentance, accompanied now with a greater zeal for the honour of God, was a firm and unshaken reliance on the assistance and protection of the Almighty; so that he could boldly say, in his speech to his army, "Be not dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for the multitude that is with him, for there be more with us than with him: with him, is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight

our

“our battles.” And then it follows (as a proof of the mighty efficacy of such a divine confidence) “The people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah.”

Fortitude then is not so properly a cardinal virtue (as some moralists affect to call it) but the result of many united virtues; particularly of humility, and a just diffidence of ourselves; a conscience purified by repentance, and without offence; a pious dependence upon God, grounded on a just knowledge of ourselves, and a due sense of his Almighty Power and Mercy; so that a true faith is also a necessary ingredient in the composition of true fortitude. This is finely described and exemplified (ver. 21. of our Lesson) in the character of a virgin, the daughter of Zion, laughing at the hearty threats of the Assyrian king; not terrified, though a virgin, but despising him, while she placed her trust in God. This made the Wise man say, “The righteous are bold as a lion^c.” This also inspired the Psalmist with such undaunted resolution and triumph, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, “whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of “my life, of whom then shall I be afraid? &c. See also Psalm xli. Acts iv. 29, &c. &c.

We see then, in this Lesson, the powerful influence, and happy effect, of humility, of prayer, and a pious recourse to the word of God, in all times of trouble: That faith and trust in him is the true, and only sure, foundation of fortitude and courage. At the same time the destruction of the Assyrian king, and his army, shews us the just reward of blasphemy, and the downfall of pride.

^c Prov. xxviii. 1.

The Thirteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

2 KINGS, Chap. xix.

1. *AND it came to pass when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went in to the house of the LORD.*

his own sins, and the sins of his people, and to deprecate the just anger of Almighty God, by private and public prayer.

2. *And he sent Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.*

3. *And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.*

4. *It may be the LORD thy God will hear all the words of Rab-shakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master*

WHEN the blasphemous message of Rab-shakeh, related in the foregoing chapter, was reported to Hezekiah, the first thing this good king did, was to humble himself for

Next, he consulted the will and word of God, by sending, in a most solemn and humble manner, his principal ministers of state, and the chief of the priests, to the prophet *Isaiah*, with the following message;

As if he had said, This is a time of great distress; not only the state in imminent danger from the invasion of a potent enemy, whom we are in no condition to withstand; but the most holy name of God is blasphemed; and we, his servants, reproached and reviled for our trust and dependence on his protection.

So

hath sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left.

So that we may well be compared to a woman, who is come to the full time of her labour, but has not strength to bring forth. — Ver. 4. *It may be the Lord thy God will hear, &c. i. e.* We have no confidence in ourselves; our

arms, or our walls, are too weak to secure us, and our fears are increased by the consciousness of our guilt; but though our strength be small, and our sins cry aloud for vengeance, why should the honour of God be vilified and blasphemed?—If therefore not for our sakes, yet for his own, *it may be the Lord will avenge the insolent and profane message of the Assyrian king, which God hath surely heard, but we tremble to repeat.*

5. *So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.*

6. *And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.*

7. *Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.*

How ready is the Lord to shew mercy! How quick in his answers of grace and favour! He had furnished his prophet with an immediate reply to the king's humble and pious address. He calms their fears, he assures their hopes, he animates their courage, and takes the cause into his own hands,—*I will send a blast, &c.* will blast all his proud designs; blast his strength, and all the mighty power

that he glories in; blast the blasphemer himself, by a shameful flight, and ignominious fall;—*even in his own land.*

160 *The Thirteenth SUNDAY 2 Kings 19.*

8. *So Rab-shakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.*

“done:” For the oracle he had pronounced by the prophet was immediately verified, and took effect.

9. *And when he heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee: he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying,*

10. *Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.*

11. *Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered?*

12. *Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Thelassar?*

If we attend to the efficacy of the small particle *so*^d, it expresses both the power and goodness of God, and is equivalent to that saying of the Psalmist, “He spake the word, and it was

Here we see how God raised up an enemy to Sennacherib to draw him off from his design against Jerusalem. And interpreters observe, that to finish this Ethiopian war, it took him up a whole year. The intelligence he received of the Ethiopians coming against him, was an accomplishment of the prediction, that *he should hear a rumour and return*, ver. 7. This obliged him first to go home to defend his own dominions against this new enemy, before he could pursue his attempts against Jerusalem; and gave the Jews a favourable respite and breathing time.—This part of the history does not indeed so clearly appear, especially by our translation; but what we render, *He sent messengers again to Hezekiah in*

^d So.] The like expressive signification of this little particle occurs in sundry other places in Scripture; where it demands the same pious attention as here, and is not to be lightly passed over.

13. *Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Henna, and Ivah?*

the Hebrew is, *He returned and wrote.* By which we may understand the motions of his army, in returning first to *Assyria*, and then back again to *Palestine*; for so *Josephus*, and others, relate the history. And this opens the sense of another place, where God promises a miraculous crop, which the earth should produce of itself^e; it being during this and the succeeding year, that this sign took effect.—And how great was such a mercy! because there could be no opportunity of plowing or sowing the ground, while the *Assyrian* army was traversing the country.

14. *And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.*

Hezekiah had before received an assurance of protection against *Sennacherib*; yet here we find he does not slight these repeated threatenings, upon a presumption of his interest in God; but, with a becoming modesty, and an humble fear, he lays the affair again before God, and betakes himself to prayer. This teaches us, in every emergency, be our prospect of success never so promising, not to be too secure; not to presume, but fear; much less to trust to any former acts of piety or devotion; but still to commit all to God by humble prayer.—No danger is too small to be feared; no affair too considerable to be prayed for.

15. *And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou*

All the attributes of God are equally great and glorious, but a wise supplicant addresses him always by those names and titles, which most aptly suit with the na-

* See ver. 29.

art. the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made heaven and earth.

16. LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God.

17. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations, and their lands.

18. And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of mens hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

19. Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.

knowledges him the creator of heaven and earth.

20. Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard.

ture and tenor of his petition. So here, *Hezekiah* first mentions the glorious relation which God bore to *Israel*; that he was Their God; They his peculiar people. Next, he solicits the mercy of God in the time of difficulty, by aptly mentioning the mercy-seat, which was *between the cherubims*; and his dwelling there, as his constant residence; to signify the readiness of the divine goodness to give a present and easy access to all that pray to him. Then, he asserts his universal dominion and sovereignty over all the world,—*Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth*; hereby justifying his address against *Sennacherib*, a mighty and foreign king; yet equally subject to God. Lastly, to confirm his own faith in the almighty power and providence of God, he ac-

And if God before was ready to give the messengers of *Hezekiah* (ver. 6.) an immediate answer by his prophet, here he shews still greater forwardness to hear and relieve his faithful servant: The king is now pre-

prevented with an answer to his prayer; he sends not to the prophet, but the prophet sends to him.—

O the energy of pious and repeated prayer! O the sweetness of divine mercy! God verifies his attributes, in relieving his people that pray to him; and, by a speedy and apposite return to their prayers, not only confirms their faith, but improves it into that knowledge, and full assurance, of his favour and goodness towards us, which the Apostle calls, “the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for.” *Heb. xi. 1.*

21. *This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him, The virgin, the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn, the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.*

The faithful part of God's Church is often compared to a virgin, because uncorrupt before God: And what could expose the weakness, as well as folly, of Sennacherib in more lively colours, than here to represent this mighty monarch so far from being the terror, that he is

the sport and contempt even of a virgin! And in this we see the power and confidence of a true faith. Lions and bears, if strongly chained, we can behold, not only without fear, but even with pleasure: So faith regards, without concern, the bitterest enemies, the dreadfullest dangers, because she regards them as chained up by the sure, though invisible, chain of divine power and goodness.

22. *Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lift up thine eyes on high? even against the holy One of Israel.*

23. *By thy messengers thou hast reproached the*

The substance of Sennacherib's insolent and blasphemous menaces against God and his people, is here rehearsed. — By mountains, and sides of Lebanon, are meant the strongest and best fortified places of Judea; — by the tall cedars and choice fir trees, may here, as

LORD, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and

in many other places, be understood, the nobility and great men; may also signify the temple, which was built of cedar of Libanus.

will cut down the tall cedar-trees thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders, and into the forest of his Carmel.

24. *I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places.*

25. *Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it, and of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps.*

26. *Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded, they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the house tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.*

27. *But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.*

28. *Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my bow into thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.*

After repeating the arrogant boastings of the Assyrian king, God returns the answer, but in a manner like himself; not acting, like a man, for the present occasion only; but as acting on a scheme concerted long ago, even from the beginning of the world; and opposing the most true words of almighty power and wisdom to the vain and audacious vauntings of an impious man, confronting his blasphemies with the certain evidence of facts, and the force of truth. For so St. Jerome paraphrases this place: "Knowest thou not, that, "in all these great things "thou hast done, thou wert "no more than the executor "of my will? that I fore- "saw, ordained, and fore- "told them all, before they "came to pass?—that I rais'd "thee up to accomplish my
" de-

“ design; to be the instrument of my providence, and
 “ of my justice, in punishing many wicked nations,
 “ and laying *waste their fenced cities into ruinous heaps?*
 “ This was the cause why they had neither strength
 “ nor courage to resist thee.—But, seeing thy pride
 “ assumes the glory of those successes to thyself, and
 “ instead of honour and gratitude to me the donor,
 “ thou repayest my favours with blasphemy against
 “ me, and rage against my people, *I will put my*
 “ *hook in thy nose, &c. i. e. I will use thee as thou*
 “ *deservest, like a wild beast, a ranging bear, and*
 “ *turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.*”—
 The application to all proud and presumptuous men,
 is obvious and plain.

29. *And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same, and in the third year sow ye and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.*

30. *And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah, shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.*

the harvest, which the *Assyrian* invasion had intercepted, and giving them two years crop for the loss of one; as a *sign* and a pledge of his future protection and favour.

31. *For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape, out of mount Zion: the zeal*

But, if God's justice spare not his enemies, especially when they conspire the ruin of his Church, how rich is his goodness to his people; how abundant his mercy to them that fear him!—Here he not only fights for his antient people, and destroys their enemies; but confirms his promise of mercy, by another extraordinary mercy: Not only saves them from the misery of death, or captivity, but also from famine and want; restoring

The literal sense of this gracious promise, carried in it an immediate comfort, and a seasonable relief against their present fears; that,

of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

32. *Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.*

33. *By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.*

34. *For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant Davids sake.*

although they were now shut up within their walls, for fear of the enemy, yet they should soon be delivered from that danger, and that confinement, and be at free liberty to go forth again; to go in and out, to plow, and to sow, and to reap, as in former times. But the spiritual meaning extends this message of grace and mercy to far more noble and enduring blessings; even the blessings of the gospel, and the glad tidings of salvation. And as our greater redemption from sin and Satan, by Jesus Christ, was

then typified by this deliverance from *Sennacherib*, and therefore could not but prove an inviolable security to *Hezekiah* and his people for the certain accomplishment of that temporal benefit (even as, in a like case, the future incarnation of Christ had been foretold to *Abaz*, as an undoubted sign of present safety¹), how can we, who live to see the accomplishment of both these events, have the least doubt of the veracity and goodness of God? His promise to *Hezekiah* was a sure word of prophecy to us: We had an interest in his deliverance; he a security, as well as interest, in Ours. 'Twas impossible the earthly *Jerusalem* should be totally destroyed, till *Jerusalem*, which is from above, was come to succeed her. And the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the true *Zion* of God, shall never be removed, till heaven itself shall take her place, and the kingdom of grace be wholly absorbed in the kingdom of glory.—In the mean time

¹ *Isaiah* vii. 14.

the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against the Church; so that, *out of her*, and *Her only*, shall go forth the *remnant* which is to be saved, and all they that are to escape.—*The zeal of the Lord, i. e.* the great love of God to mankind, *shall do this*,—shall accomplish our salvation. And *this city* of refuge he will *defend, to save it*; yea, therefore *defend it*, even Now from all its enemies, that he may save it for ever:—And that for his *own sake*, as God, the Saviour of men; and for his *servant David's sake*, as the Son, as well as Lord, of *David*;—as son of God, and son of man.

35. *And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.*

36. *So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.*

37. *And it came to pass as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Shazzer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia; and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.*

When they arose, &c.] That is, when they who survived this dreadful slaughter, arose *in the morning, &c.* for all were not slain; a small number were reserved to be the witnesses of a judgment so terrible, of a power so invincible; a power, so superior to *Sennacherib*, who had blasphemed the true God; a power, so mighty to save the good *Hezekiah*, who had trusted in him.—The prodigious number of the slain were so many monuments of mercy to his people; of justice to his enemies; of his eternal power and godhead to both.—The few that remained were not only eye-witnesses of this great victory of the true God, and the triumph of his people, but

were sent back into their own land, to proclaim and preach it there.—So, “the fierceness of man
“ did turn to his praise, the remainder of wrath

“did he restrain?”—Howbeit, *Sennacherib*, though confounded and put to flight, yet owns not the power of him who did it: He is terrified and flies, but is not converted.—We often hear of blasphemers punished, but seldom penitent: Blasphemy is properly the sin of hell, an outrageous defiance, an inveterate hatred of God, which none can be capable of committing, till they are past all grace, and consummated in all wickedness; like infernal fiends they rage against God; they may feel and smart under the scourge of his judgments, but will not understand, nor ever be reclaimed. Such are vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction; they serve for examples of divine vengeance, to warn others, but commonly perish themselves. *Sennacherib* had proofs sufficient of the supreme power and pre-eminence of the Almighty God of *Jacob*, and yet returns to the idolatrous worship of *Nisroch his god*, and there he meets his fate;—not from the hand of an *angel*, but of his own *sons*. He had despised and blasphemed, in the height of his pride, the Author of his being, and only source of his sovereign power; for this he lost his mighty army, and the strength he relied on: He obstinately persists in his idolatry, and rejects the God that spared him; for this he loses his crown and his life.—From blasphemy and obduracy of heart, the reigning sins of these perillous, irreligious times, good Lord deliver us!

‡ *Psalms lxxvi.* This deliverance from *Sennacherib* is conceived to have been the occasion of penning this Psalm.—So Archbishop *Leighton*, Sermon XIth. and Bishop *Patrick in locum*.



The Thirteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

2 KINGS, Chap. xxiii.

P R E F A C E.

KING Jofiah is fet forth, in this Lesson, as an example of early and sincere piety. At eight years old he began to reign, and even at that age, he did that which was right in the fight of the Lord, chap. xxii. 2.

The first thing he did, was to repair the house of the Lord.—Here he finds the book of the law; rents his cloaths, upon hearing the contents; sends to enquire of the Lord for himself and the people, concerning the words of the law; receives an answer by Huldah the prophetess, denouncing judgments against the nation, but a promise of peace to himself, because his heart was tender and penitent.

His next care was to summon the people together to hear the word of God: He reads it to them in the temple, and there makes a covenant before the Lord, to which the people agreed. Then he proceeds to put this covenant in execution: First, he cleanses the temple of all the vessels and utensils that had been made for Baal, &c. puts down the idolatrous priests, and destroys the groves and altars, which his predecessors had erected, or left standing there,
and

170 *The Thirteenth SUNDAY* 2 Kings 23.

and burnt them. Then he goes on to make a general reformation in all parts of the kingdom, even in Israel (which was now subject to him), as well as in Judah, and leaves no monuments of idolatry standing.—An example, not only for kings and magistrates, where any notorious errors or abuses have crept into the Church or State, but even for every private Christian to follow, when we make or renew our baptismal covenant. The first thing we undertook and promised, and therefore the first which ought to be put in execution, is rencouncing and destroying, as much as in us lies, all corruptions of the heart, all filthiness, both of the flesh and spirit, and all the enemies of our salvation; so carrying on the great work of our redemption in conjunction with our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, who came into the world on purpose that he might destroy the works of the devil. Christ cleansed the temple, as Josiah had done, of pollution and profaneness; so ought we these temples of our bodies, from all uncleanness, by a sincere and thorough repentance, and reformation of life.

The Thirteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

2 KINGS, Chap. xxiii.

History of the Reformation by king Josiah, &c.

1. **A**ND the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah, and of Jerusalem.
2. And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with him, and **I**N Hezekiah, Josiah, and other good kings of Judah, we see the great influence of royal power and authority in reforming the religion or manners of a nation. By the present history of Josiah's pious zeal in abolishing idolatry, and restoring

the priests, and the prophets, and all the people both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD.

3. *And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant, that were written in this book: and all the people stood to the covenant.*

4. *And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD, all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burnt them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el.*

5. *And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places, in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about*

the worship of God, we observe, that not only the elders and rulers of the people concurred therein, but all the people, both great and small, came to hear the book of the law: And after the king had made a solemn vow, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, it is added, that all the people also stood to the covenant.

Thus the outward face of religion was restored. But if we consult the writings of *Jeremiah*, who lived at the same time, we shall find, that this reformation of the people was but hypocritical, a mere external shew, in compliance with the king's command, but no sincere conversion to God. For so the prophet testifies against them (ch. v.), that they had "dealt very treacherously against the Lord; that they had broken the yoke, and burst the bonds [of the covenant]; that they had revolted and gone."

—And this is the reason of what we afterwards read in this Lesson, ver. 26. That notwithstanding all that *Jeremiah* had done, the Lord, turned not from the fierceness of
his

172 *The Thirteenth* SUNDAY 2 Kings 23.

Jerusalem, them also that burnt incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

his great wrath, &c. and threatened to remove Judah also out of his sight, as he had removed Israel, &c.—

Whence we may learn, that although it be a great blessing

*to have religious princes, and the true Church reformed and established by laws amongst us, yet the bare profession of the true religion will not avail to avert the judgments of God. The form of Godliness without the power, will rather hasten on our ruin, than prevent it; according to the words of the same prophet, ch. xvi. 19. “O earth, behold I will
“bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their
“thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my
“words” [which had been read to them], “nor
“to my law” [which they had covenanted to keep],
“but rejected it.”*

6. And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burnt it at the brook Kidron, and stampd it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people.

7. And he brake down the houses of the sodomites that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove.

8. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had

He brought out the grove, &c.] This was the graven image of a grove, which Manasses had made, and set up in the temple, as we read, ch. xxi. 7. And, the hangings for the grove, which the women wove, were a kind of curtains to be thrown over the groves, for the greater privacy of those shameful scenes of lewdness, which were to be acted there. Hence the Hebrew calls them [Batbim] houses.

So great and general had been the apostacy and falling away from the true religion, in the preceding reigns, that the very priests had joined

burnt incense, from Geba to Beer-sheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on a mans left hand at the gate of the city.

9. *Nevertheless, the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren.*

They came not up to the altar that was there, *i. e.* they were not admitted to that honour, nor restored to the full exercise of their functions, but only to the most inferior parts of their office, that so they might *bear their iniquity*, as *Ezekiel* expresses it^a; that is, might bear that mark of degradation as a punishment of their crime, and a perpetual badge of their infamous fall; but *they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren*. God shews an act of mercy and indulgence towards them; degrading them indeed, yet continuing a maintenance to them. See this more fully explained in that determination of God in *Ezek.* ch. xliv. concerning apostate priests, ver. x, &c. “And the Levites that are gone away from me after their idols, they shall even bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, &c. Because they ministered to them before their idols, they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, &c. They shall bear their shame, &c.”—And by the history of the primitive Church we find, that the like

joined in the corruption of the times, and not only burnt incense in the *high places*, contrary to the law of *Moses*, but even officiated in the most impious rites of idolatry; and so, of ministers of the most high God, made themselves the ministers of devils. These *Josiah* did not put to death, but (as it is said) *brought them away from the cities of Judah*. He took them, as it were, captive, and brought them to *Jerusalem*. Then it is added,

^a Chap. xliv. 12.

penalty was inflicted on those of the priesthood, who, in times of persecution, had lapsed into idolatry, and been guilty of the like apostasy: They were reduced to the state of mere laicks; might eat indeed, among their brethren, of the unleavened bread; that is, they were, on due repentance, admitted to the communion, but not allowed to consecrate, or offer, the holy elements, as priests, any more. So speaks St. Cyprian, Epist. 5. concerning such lapsed priests. "They, who bring such heavy sins along with them, " as those of sacrificing to idols, do but offer to God " a profane oblation, when they sacrifice to him; nor " can they be intituled to a share in his priesthood, " or duly perform their office of interceding for their " brethren before him, &c."—But, in the 20th ver. of our Lesson, we read, that *Josiah* slew (or sacrificed) *all the priests of the high places upon the altars, &c.* that is, those priests, who had been ordained by the idolatrous kings of *Israel*, and were not of the tribe of *Levi*; these he slew.—Is not this a justification of the Church of *England*, which receives the priests of the idolatrous Church of *Rome*, on their conversion, but not the ministers of sectaries, because they are not of the tribe of *Levi*, that is, never were duly ordained: These she slays, that is, deprives of all priestly character.

10. *And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.*

11. *And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech*

Note, The *valley of the son of Hinnom* was a pleasant place nigh unto *Jerusalem*, dedicated to the idol *Molech*, where they used to make their children pass through the fire. The spot where this was done was called *Tophet*, signifying *Tympanum*, a tabor, or kind of drum, because the priests of that idol played upon tabors at the time

the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burnt the chariots of the sun with fire.

12. *And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Abaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.*

13. *And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.*

14. *And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.*

15. *Moreover, the altar that was at Beth-el, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burnt the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burnt the grove.*

16. *And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the*

time of sacrificing, that so the children's cries and shrieks might not be heard.

—Hence *Tophet*, in other places of Scripture, is set to signify hell (so *Isaiab xxx. 33.*) and, from the *Hebrew* [*Ge-Hinnom*, which signifies the valley of *Hinnom*, came the word *Gebenna*, which our Lord uses (*Matt. v. 30.*) to denote hell, and by Christian writers is generally used to signify that place of torment, to which the damned are consigned. See *Lee, Crit.*

Sacra, on the word Γέννηα.

This verified the prophecy (*1 Kings xiii.*) which the prophet pronounced concerning that altar, and the burning of men's bones thereon, about 300 years before. And in this event, so verified, we behold an awful type of the judgment of the last day, when the bodies of the wicked shall be raised out of their graves to be burnt; but the

176 *The Thirteenth* SUNDAY 2 Kings 23.

mount, and sent, and took the righteous shall rest in the bones out of the sepulchres, and burnt them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD, which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

17. Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Beth-el.

18. And he said, Let him alone, let no man move his bones: so they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria.

19. And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger, Jofiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Beth-el.

20. And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there, upon the altars, and burnt mens bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

And if this transaction represent to us the state of rewards and punishments after death, even a state of God's fiery indignation against the wicked, but of rest and peace to those who die in peace with him; the regard which Jofiah paid to the sepulchres of the two prophets, is also a lesson to Christians not to violate the graves of those who have died in the same faith and hope with them. These profanations of the dead, which even heathens abhorred, are not only to be found among Papists against Protestants, but, in these degenerate times we live in, Protestants themselves are not afraid to desecrate the

places of burial; to cast out the bones of their ancestors out of their graves; to build their houses, and erect proud mansions on the monuments of the dead.—A subject too shocking to bear a long descant upon; but alas! grown too common, to excite that horror it deserves, or the least hope of that amendment it calls for!

Thus

12. *And the king commanded all the people, saying, keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant.*

22. *Surely there was not holden such a passover, from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah:*

23. *But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem.*

24. *Moreover, the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah, and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law, which were written in the book that Hilkiab the priest found in the house of the LORD.*

25. *And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.*

Thus also ought all Christians to do, and this is the order we should observe; first, *put away* and destroy all the corruptions of our lives, all abominations of false worship, and immoral practices; that is, renew and put in execution our baptismal vow, before we approach the Lord's table, and come to *keep the passover*: Lastly, as he (ver. 24.) put away *the workers with familiar spirits, &c.* so must we forsake all evil company: not only renouncing Satan and his works, but all vain and wicked conversation with the world, after our return to God, and resolutions of obedience. As to such as question the reality of spirits and witchcraft, let them compare this Scripture, and many other passages in Holy writ, with the opinion of our modern Sadducees, who deny both, and then choose which they will believe. — Good *Josiah*, we see, made a law to punish and extirpate the *workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards*, for which he stands here approved of God. — We too had once such a law. — What shall we say to its repeal? .

178 *The Thirteenth SUNDAY* 2 Kings 2

26. *Notwithstanding, the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal.*

27. *And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem, which I have chosen, and the house of which I have said, My name shall be there.*

28. *Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the books of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?*

29. *In his days Pharaoh-nechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him, and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him.*

30. *And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre: and the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son*

The reason hath already been observed, why the Lord turned not away from the fierceness of his great wrath against Judah, notwithstanding the piety and zeal of the good Josiah in reforming the Church, and restoring the profession of the true religion. — But an objection may arise, Why, although the people continued still unreformed in their hearts, and therefore still deserved the heavy judgments of God, for their hypocrisy, why (may some say) should the good Josiah be cut off by a violent and untimely death? We may answer: That one part of the punishment of that people was the untimely loss of so excellent a king. — His death made way for those judgments, which their impenitence and mock conversion deserved, when the measure of their iniquities was filled up. — But still, was not Josiah punished also by so sudden an end, an end indeed not unlike that of the wicked Abab? For it is said, in Chron. “The archers shot at king Josiah, who had disguised himself, that he might fight with Pharaoh.

of *Josiah*, and anointed him, and made him king in his fathers stead.

31. *Jehoahaz* was twenty and three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in *Jerusalem*: and his mothers name was *Hamutal* the daughter of *Jeremiah* of *Libnah*.

32. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

33. And *Pharaoh-nechob* put him in bands at *Riblah* in the land of *Hamath*, that he might not reign in *Jerusalem*, and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold.

34. And *Pharaoh-nechob* made *Eliakim* the son of *Josiah* king in the room of *Josiah* his father, and turned his name to *Jehoiakim*, and took *Jehoahaz* away: and he came to *Egypt*, and died there.

35. And *Jehoiakim* gave the silver and the gold to *Pharaoh*, but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of *Pharaoh*; he exacted the

"*Pharaoh-nechob* ^b." It is confessed, that this may look like a judgment, and his end to be like *Abab*'s, by a random shot, and without honour: Yet it is as true, that he died in peace, as it had been promised him; that is, if we understand that best of all peace, peace with his God. This he was promised in that message from God by *Huldah* the prophetess, That he should "be gathered unto his grave in peace."

And that this was intended a blessing appears from the words wherewith that message concludes, "Thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place." — He was taken away therefore from the evil to come; which surely is a great mercy. — It is not indeed to be denied, but that he drew this disaster upon himself; the Scripture, in *Chronicles*, taxing him with some rashness in engaging with *Pharaoh* without any just cause. For it is there said, "He hearkened not unto the words of *Nechob* from the mouth of God, and came to fight, &c." Which

^b 2 Chron. xxxv. 21.

^c Ch. xxii. 20.

silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaoh-nechoh.

36. *Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and his mothers name was Zebudab the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.*

37. *And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.*

shews, that the warning given by *Nechoh* to forbear, was from God; but he slighted it; probably for some reasons purely political; for it does not appear that he consulted the oracle of God, to know his will concerning this expedition. So that, in truth, this was a false step of that good man, and he fell by it. But it was the will of God to leave him, at this juncture, to himself, that he might fall and be gathered to his grave, and so not live to see the much greater evils, which were to fall upon that

abandoned people. Thus we see, in the course of Providence, sometimes a people are punished for the faults of their princes; sometimes a good prince suffers for the sins of a wicked people. So *Moses* was punished for the sake of *Israel*, and *Israel* plagued for the crime of *David*. And yet, when we look heedfully to the ways of Divine Justice, we always find, in our own case and others, that in strictness no man suffers unjustly. — *Moses* was punished, — And why? “Because he spake unadvisedly with his lips.” And here *Josiah* falls, because he engaged as unadvisedly in a war. — Let God therefore be justified in his saying, and clear when he is judged. — It may teach us also this comfortable lesson, That sins, which deserve, and may sometimes be punished with, a temporal death, do not always exclude from the peace of God. *Josiah* dies in battle, through imprudence, and yet dies in peace. Death, though a penalty, was to him, as it is to all good men, not so much the end as the beginning of life. It was rather the atonement,

E. P. *after* T R I N I T Y. 181

ment, than a punishment of his fault. O may our death be accepted as a sacrifice and satisfaction, through the merits of Christ, for all the sins and offences of our life past; that so, however violent and painful it may be, we also may *die in peace*, and the spirit be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Amen!





The Fourteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

J E R E M. Chap. v.

P R E F A C E.

*T*HE late Lessons out of the historical books of Scripture, have set before us a lively representation of the corrupt state of the Jewish nation, together with the causes of it.

The evil example of bad princes had done more to corrupt the faith and morals of that people, than all the good examples and endeavours of some religious kings had power or influence to reform.

The pious Josiah had applied himself with greater zeal than any of his predecessors, to redress the general corruption in Church and State; but with small success, as appears from that description of the great wickedness of those times, which we find both in the prophecies of Jeremiah, and in the remarkable denunciation of God's anger against the Jewish nation, which we read in one of the last Sunday's Lessons (2 Kings xxiii. 26.), where it is said, "Notwithstanding, the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, &c. And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, &c."

King

King Josiah had done all he could to suppress idolatry, and to restore the true religion and purity of God's worship; but was not able to work any reformation in the hearts of his subjects, nor to remove the idols, which they had set up there^a; so that, although by his instigation and example, all the people had "made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all their heart, and all their soul, &c^b;" yet no sooner was he dead, but they universally relapsed into idolatry, and brake the solemn engagement they had so lately entered into with the Lord their God. — Even his own children proved, every one of them, idolatrous and profane persons; insomuch that, in this chapter (which, by the tenor of it, must have been written very soon after the death of Josiah), almighty God challenges all Jerusalem to produce one good man, that executed judgment, and fought the truth, and he would pardon it.

We find indeed the like charge in Isaiah, ch. i. 4, 5, 6. that then the corruption had generally seized the whole body of that people, "from the sole of the foot even to the head, &c." Nevertheless, a remnant of righteous persons were still left^c to stand in the gap, and avert the judgments of God.

But here, the depravation was grown universal; — not so much as a small remnant left; none, that did good, no not one. All sorts of people, as well the most private, as those that were in public stations, both great and small, were degenerated into a more profligate and notorious degree of wickedness, than they were in the days of Isaiah. Then the prophet complained chiefly of their immorality and hypocrisy; but he acknowledges, that they still retained the form of godliness, tho' they denied the power thereof; that they held the truth and outward profession of religion, tho' in unrighteousness, and without sincerity. But now, they were come to that pass, that they had cast off the very appearance of piety; had openly and pro-

^a Ezek. xiv. 4.

^b 2 Kings xxiii. 3.

^c Ver. 9.

feffedly renounced the worship of the true God: That both priests and people "had altogether broken the yoke, and "burst the bonds^d."

In consequence of this general revolt from God, and of their other enormous crimes, particularly of adultery, which they committed openly, without the least shame or remorse; of treachery and injustice in their dealings; of insatiable avarice and oppression; and an impenetrable obduracy and profane scoffing at the threatnings of Divine judgments; not only rejecting, but menacing again, the prophets of God, who denounced such heavy judgments; God is provoked to deliver them up to a final excision, renouncing all further protection of them, and giving their enemies a commission "to go up upon their walls, and "take away their battlements, for they are not the "Lords." ver. 10.

This desperate and abandoned condition of the Jewish people, is but too true a picture of the epidemical corruption of this sinful nation. Nay, it may too truly be said of us, that we overpass their deeds, and exceed them in all manner of wickedness. And from so horrible a scene of impiety, profaneness, infidelity, and atheism, which has so generally overspread all ranks and degrees of people amongst us, denying not only the Lord that bought us, but the very God that made us, may we not, with more reason, expect the like destruction from the Almighty to fall upon us, as happened to those profligate Jews? and justly imagine, that we hear our offended God say of us, as he did of them, Shall I not visit for these things, shall not my soul be avenged of such a nation as this? ver. 9. & ver. 29.

In this Lesson therefore we are especially taught, that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to "any people^e;" that the prosperity of any state is best founded on national virtue; but that a general corruption of manners is the cause and forerunner of general and public judgments: In a word, that private VICES unre-

^d See remark on v. 11.

^e Prov. xiv. 34.

strained, must end in public MISCHIEFS; and that, notwithstanding the modern opinion of some pretending observers of times, there is a real gradation of national, as well as of private sins, when a people, as well as some particular persons, grow more wicked and profligate than they were.—That “no man becomes consummately wicked at once,” was an old remark of an heathen poet^f: And the same observation holds good of a nation.—Whoever compares our present times with those of but forty or fifty years ago, cannot but be convinced, that this generation is grown far more corrupt and wicked than the last; if not in immoralities, yet in atheism, profaneness, and infidelity; which, of all sins, are the most enormous, and most provoking; and consequently the most obnoxious to the Divine vengeance.

The Fourteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

JEREM. Chap. v.

1. **R**UN ye to and fro thro’ the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.

SIN and wickedness had so universally overspread the city of Jerusalem, that, in appearance, there was not one good man left; no signs of virtue to be seen in the streets, or public places of concourse, courts of justice, &c. And what greater mark of a total dissolution of man-

ners, than when vice appears in public, and virtue hides its head!—When wickedness keeps the streets, like a victorious enemy that keeps the field, and piety retires into holes and corners! when evil ap-

^f Nemo repente fuit turpissimus.—Juven.

pears open and barefaced, and goodness wants courage or power to withstand it? Indeed, when the one triumphs and reigns, having gained possession of all posts of honour, trust, and profit, the other must either suffer, or lie concealed. Nay, in such times, how hard will it be to find a truly honest and a good man! But while we tremble, and stand amazed, at the swift progress of sin, which, after it hath once gained the ascendant, spreads like a plague, and soon infects the whole; at the same time we have reason, in the case before us, to admire the forbearance of Almighty God, in sparing a vicious profligate people, and offering pardon, on so easy and cheap terms, as *one good man*; one, that had interest or resolution enough to stand in the gap in so critical a conjuncture.

As the Lord liveth, was the common form of oath among the Jews^e; but now, the only use they made of this sacred oath, was to

2. *And though they say, The LORD liveth, surely they swear falsely.* cheat and deceive; the only use they made of that holy and tremendous name, was to curse and to swear by. The first is perjury, and shewed consummate villainy; the second a great contempt of God, or downright infidelity.—Both ways it argues the highest degree of *falsehood*;—1st, Towards man, in cheating him under the colour of religion. 2dly, Towards God, in calling him to witness a lie.

The eyes of man are generally on his profit, or his pleasure. These are the ends which wicked men serve, by

3. *O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but*

^e So Martial,—*Jura, Verpe, per Anchialum*. The poet urges a Jew to swear by *Anchialum* (a word framed from the Hebrew [*imchai gnellion*], i. e. *si vivit altissimus*, or, *the Lord liveth* *), otherwise he declares, he would not believe him.

* The most solemn oath among the Jews, whom the poet calls *verpe*, i. e. *circumcised*.

use

they have not grieved ; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction : they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return.

4. *Therefore I said, Surely these are poor, they are foolish : for they know not the way of the LORD, nor the judgment of their God.*

use of the most sacred things, such as God and religion, oaths and sacraments. But, as to God, his constant view is to *truth* and virtue. To plant these in us is his aim, in all his favours, and the design of all his corrections. — The good man sees this, and can say, with *David*, “ Thy rod and thy staff “ (both thy justice, and thy “ mercy) comfort me :” But, as for the ungodly, ’tis not so with them ; the very means, which God uses to reclaim them, whether gentle or severe, turn still to their greater condemnation, being perverted, like wholesome food in a distempered stomach, to the aggravation of their misery and ruin. — Prosperity makes them insolent and proud ; adversity casts them either into discontent, inveterate malice, or desperation ; insomuch, that though the Lord *strike* them, they do not *grieve*, or repent of their sin ; though he *consume* them, by sickness, by poverty, by mortality, *they refuse to receive* any benefit by correction. — Habitual sin turns to open defiance against God and his judgments, grows impenetrable to grace, is hardened against reproof, and becomes incapable of repentance. — But such reprobates as these one would only expect to find among the *poor* and the *foolish*, the ignorant and illiterate vulgar, whose want of instruction and knowledge had betrayed them into so desperate a depravity of life and manners.

5. *I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them ; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God : but these*

Where greater knowledge is, one might well expect to find the greater virtue ; but, alas ! ’tis too often quite otherwise : For knowledge, without grace, serves only to puff up ; and too much learning

have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. learning (where piety is wanting) will make one

truly mad. Ignorance among the common people, is some excuse for their want of virtue; they are wicked, even because they are *poor and foolish*; but the sins of *great men* have the aggravation of a double guilt; both as they are committed against knowledge, and as their ill influence and example, are the chief causes of that general corruption which prevails in the world. Besides, the nature of their crimes, as well as the consequences, are far more heinous than those of their inferiors, being committed against greater obligations, as well as light: They sin with a high hand, *break the yoke, and burst the bonds*, of God's laws, and of their own solemn engagements, presumptuously, audaciously; and, by their authority, give a sanction to wickedness, and a licence to sin^h.

How common is it, when we fall into trouble and affliction, to murmur and complain, but never to search into the real causes of our sufferings! We look at the *lion* that slays, the *wolf*, or the *leopard*, that spoils us; but that true and necessary reflection we are too apt to neglect, which the Holy Spirit here puts in the mouth of his prophet, that these furious beasts devour us not but for our disobedience; even *because our transgressions are many, and our backslidings are increased*.—By the *lion*, *wolf*, and *leopard*, some interpreters understand *Nebuchadnezzar*, &c. who took and destroyed the city of *Jerusalem*. But we may as

^h So St. Jerome, *Quanto in divitibus major auctoritas, tanto major insipientia peccatorum.*

truly and more fully understand, by them, our three spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. — To be given up a prey to these, is one of the heaviest judgments that can befall any one in this life. — In baptism, we renounced and escaped their power; by revolting from God, we forsake our own mercy, and fall into their clutches again. — The devil is elsewhere called a roaring *lion*¹: The flesh may well be compared to a *wolf of the evening*; because of its manifold lusts, and works of darkness; and nothing can be a fitter emblem of the *world* than the *leopard*, whose beautiful spots, and fierce nature, do aptly represent both its vanity, and its danger; the alluring, but destructive, pleasures, wherewith it abounds; and which pure religion and undefiled, warns us to keep ourselves *unspotted* from, *Jam. i. 17.*

How shall I pardon, &c.]

7. *How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots houses.*

8. *They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbours wife.*

Apostacy is, in its nature, unpardonable; and we are assured, that even the Gospel hath no more sacrifice for such a sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment^k. Here God seems at a loss what to do; willing (thro' the impulse of mercy) to forgive his backsliding people; but with-holden by his justice: — *How shall I pardon thee for this?* — Repentance, and turning to God, is the only condition of pardon; but they that forsake him, do, of course, forsake all means of grace, and possibility of salvation. — The first and principal cause of this apostacy, and falling from God, is here ascribed to intemperance. — This, by pampering the body, and feeding the lusts of the

¹ 1 Peter v. 8.

^k Heb. vi. 4. and x. 26.

flesh,

flesh, betrayed them first to luxury, to commit all acts of uncleanness with greediness; and then to downright irreligion, and a total alienation from God.—Gluttony is the fewel of lust; and nothing is more contrary to the spirit of holiness than impurity.—The flesh and the spirit are two opposites:—He that follows the one, must necessarily relinquish the other.—If led by the spirit, he shall live; if by the flesh, he shall as surely die, *Rom. viii. 13.* See also the Epist. for this *Sunday*.

“Hear ye, ye rich men, saith St. *Jerome*, ye that
 “are filled and fed to the full with the good things
 “of this world, and abandon yourselves to too free
 “an use of earthly enjoyments: What is it that men
 “wish for, when they desire to grow rich, but to fall
 “(as St. *Paul* says) into the *snare of the devil*, and into
 “a gulph of sin? Did such consider, what is here said
 “of the *Jews*, that by high feeding they fell into adul-
 “teries, and all manner of brutal lusts; became
 “lewd and rampant as papered *horses*; they would
 “possibly be more moderate in the use of their riches;
 “they would be ashamed to set so high a value on
 “those temporal advantages, which too liberal an use
 “of turns even a wise man into a beast.”

9. *Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*

See here again the reluctance of a gracious God to acts of punishment! What can be more provoking to his justice, than such enormous crimes, and so general a corruption? Yet mercy seems to plead that he would spare them still; and justice, as if withheld, puts this just, and yet mild and tender question, to mercy: *Shall I not visit for these things?* &c.—O the depth of the riches of the love and the mercies of God! How patient and forbearing to the greatest of sinners!—How much more gracious then will he be to the poor returning penitent! yea, where he sees the least hope of virtue, the least
 spark

spark of love: He will not reject the weakest endeavours:—The very desire of virtue shall be accepted, tho' the act, through inability, be wanting: "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax¹."

10. *Go ye upon her walls, and destroy, but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the LORDs.*

After a long struggle, justice prevails for punishing this rebellious and impenitent people; yet the commission is limited to their *walls and battlements*; these were to be demolished; from

these God withdraws his guard and protection, and disowns them for *his*; but his people he does not so intirely reject; a remnant is reserved: — *Her walls destroy, but not make a full end^m*.—See, see still, the bright footsteps of mercy in the midst of judgments! The enemy may be let loose against us, and ours.—Our goods, our *walls*, and *battlements*, the things we place too great a confidence, too much of our happiness and security, in; these may be taken from us, because *they are not the Lords*, they are not of *him*, but are of *the world*. Perhaps our material Churches, the *walls* and buildings of those sacred edifices, may again be taken from us, or profaned, as they were in a former century; but our remains, our precious souls, he is too tender of, to deliver up to the will of our enemies.—He sets them their bounds:—So far shall they go, and no further.—This is the true and right idea, which this, and sundry other Scriptures, give us of the conduct of Divine Providence, in all the troubles, wars, or persecutions, that happen to his people in the world. In these severe trials the wicked are only the ministers of God's justice; from him they receive their orders, though they know him not; and in such a manner, as is only visible to the eye of faith.—Let not then such instruments of wrath

¹ Matt. xii. 20.

^m Ver. 18.

boast themselves in their success against the servants of God.—The rod, when done with, shall be thrown into the fire. Neither let the servants of God despair; “They that *bear* the rod, and him that appointed “it”, shall come out of the flames purified and refined, as gold out of the furnace.

11. *For the house of Israel, and the house of Judah, have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD.*

Dealt treacherously, not only in a notorious breach of their solemn vow in circumcision, but of that which they had so very lately renewed, ratified, and confirmed, in the reign, and at

the instance, of good king *Josiah*.

12. *They have belied the LORD, and said, It is not he, neither shall evil come upon us, neither shall we see sword nor famine:*

This is the common way of hardened sinners; say what you will to them of God's judgments and threatnings against sin, they either evade all such discourse, by denying the judgments of God, and ascribing all to natural causes, or mere chance; at least, they apply not such things to themselves, or lay

13. *And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them.*

them to heart. — Where God himself is therefore so *belied*, or so slighted, no wonder his servants, who, prophesy, or represent the denunciations of his wrath against sin, should meet with such ill treatment; should be so contemned, or perhaps threatned, for their most serious and faithful admonitions.

14. *Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word,*

The impious act of *Jehoiakim*, in burning the written roll which came from *Jeremiah* (tho' not menti-

ⁿ *Mich. vi.*

° Ver. 13. is spoken by the wicked and unbelievers, and expressed with a menacing air and gesture.

behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.

oned till afterwards, chap. xxxvi.) we may presume, was done before the present prophecy was delivered; and then this fore threatening against that profane king, and against his people; who, it is said (ver. 24. of that chap.) *were not afraid* for what he had done, *nor rent their garments*, as the heinousness of the fact deserved, seems exactly suited to their crimes.—As they had consumed that roll in the fire, they themselves should become fuel to the flames: That, although they had destroyed the word written, the *words* in the prophet's *mouth* should prove *as fire*, and themselves *as wood*, to be burnt and destroyed. Hence learn we, that those whom the Scriptures and written word cannot reform, the word spoken shall condemn and destroy: So saith the judge himself, “The WORD which I have SPOKEN unto you, it shall judge you in the last day^p.” Then will all obstinate and incorrigible sinners, by a woful and too late experience, find the oracles of God to be true; that his *Word* is neither to be suppressed in this world, nor evaded in the next.

15. *Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.*

16. *Their quiver is an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men.*

17. *And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread,*

This prediction has long since been accomplished on the unhappy *Jews*, whom it immediately concerned; but are there not still some bitter dregs in this cup of God's wrath, for all ungodly and hardened sinners to drink? Doubtless: God still has, and ever will have, his armies in reserve to destroy the wicked.—Not only *Chaldeans*, men like ourselves, may be brought upon us, when

^p John xii. 48.

which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds; they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig-trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword.

18. *Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you.*

he commands, to destroy, and to devour:—But if he please to let loose our very lusts and passions; who can resist so numerous, so terrible, an host? These are our *antient* enemies, the *Aborigines* and first natives of our wretched nature, the *Amorites* and *Anakims*; who can stand against them?—Their language is confusion; their fiery darts devour like the grave; their insatiable appetites eat up our substance, and consume our wealth.—For what is so expensive as pride? what so wasteful as luxury and excess? what brings to decay like idleness and sloth? And even tho' riches abound, either envy will not suffer the unhappy owner to take the least comfort in what he possesses, or avarice suffer him to enjoy it: The one vice makes him miserable, and the other poor, even in the midst of his greatest plenty.—And thus our *harvests*, our *flocks*, and *herds*, our *vines* and *fig-trees*, prove a prey and a spoil to an intestine enemy, which can neither be numbered, nor opposed, when God gives the commission to invade us.—*Nevertheless in those days I will not make a full end with you.*—Here Divine mercy enters a caveat, and makes a reserve, a second promise, that his people shall not be brought to a *full end*, shall not be utterly destroyed.

19. *And it shall come to pass when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the LORD our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have*

God's end in punishing his Church, is not for destruction, but for edification and amendment, that so the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord. It is, first, to bring us to a sense of
of

forfaken me, and served strange gods ^a in your land; so ye shall serve strangers in a land that is not yours.

of our fins; which is done by feeling the sad effects of them; namely, pain and punishment; next, to awaken our faith, and to make us know and discern the hand that smites.—This is the design of all our sufferings, and the general method which God uses to bring all sinners to repentance. This, our Lesson shews, was the course he took with his antient people the *Jews*; and, as he foresaw which of them would prove true penitents, and be of the number of those few, which should be saved, the first motion to a true conversion is here foretold, and described.—A time should come, when they should say, *Wherefore doth the Lord our God all these things unto us?* And this, doubtless, is a good beginning, a necessary step in repentance, first, to see our misery, and then to know the author and inflicter of it; namely, that it is the *Lord our God*. To feel our sufferings for sin, is some symptom of the spiritual life; to believe them to be from God, is a hopeful sign of a true faith: What remains, to ripen these first fruits of grace, and bring them to perfection, but to understand the cause of our sufferings (*wherefore God afflicts*), that is to say, to have a right sense and knowledge of sin, its nature, its guilt, as well as danger? And this is best learned from God's prophet [that is, his word.]—*Then shalt thou answer them, &c.* All which degrees, namely, 1st, The danger; 2dly, The belief of God's providence and justice, *i. e.* a right faith; 3dly, The conviction of our guilt, or the nature and demerits, as well as the particular kinds of sins we have committed, do essentially constitute a true repentance, and must effectually work in us that godly sorrow, which alone can produce a repentance not to be repented of.

^a *Heb.* The gods of the stranger.

20. *Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying,*

21. *Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding^r; which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not:*

Lord, and by his^u apostles, as mere animal men, void of all spiritual life and sense, who had faculties only to discern natural things, none to receive the things that are spiritual; men who had eyes in their heads, but none in their hearts;—none to see the things they had most need to see; had *ears* quick enough to hear worldly things, but dead to all the functions of the divine life, and deaf to the voice and motions of the Spirit of God. And what can be a greater folly, a greater stupidity, than this, to be alive, and quick sighted to every thing, but our own interest and happiness?—*O foolish people, and without an heart!* having neither understanding nor affections for the one thing needful!

22. *Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet cannot they prevail: though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?*

The spiritual life has its senses of *bearing, seeing, &c.* as well as the animal; and 'tis with these senses alone that we can *hear* God in his word, or *see* him in his works. But the *Jewish* people are complained of by the^s prophets, by our^t

The only cure for this spiritual deadness, is faith and love; faith opens the eyes and the ears of the soul, to receive divine objects, their reality and essence; love discovers their beauty and excellence, and unites the heart unto them: Faith gives a prospect of the good things of God; love puts us in possession: Faith

^r Heb. Without heart.

^s Isa. vi. 10, &c.

^t Matt. xiii. 13.

^u Rom. viii. 11.

23. *But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart: they are revolted and gone.*

24. *Neither say they in their hearts, Let us now fear the LORD our God that giveth rain, both the former and the latter in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.*

shews the terrors of the Lord [*Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence? &c.*]: Love looks at the many mercies and blessings of his paternal care, and universal providence, in giving rain, *both the former and the latter rain in his season*; in reserving unto us, tho' unworthy of any favours, *the appointed weeks of the harvest.*—O thou,

who art the giver of every good and perfect gift! thou, who art the resurrection and the life! give us this spiritual life, or none: reduce our revolting hearts to thy obedience; set *bounds* to our disordered passions, as thou dost to the raging *sea*: Give us the light of faith, to see and know thee; give us the warmth of charity, to love and enjoy thee! “Give us thy grace, and it sufficeth ^x.”

25. *Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.*

The want of these things is ever owing to our unfitness to receive them. 'Tis not God, but our *sins*, which withhold them from us: The cause of our misery is wholly in ourselves, and not in God.—“O *Israel*, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help,” saith God by his prophet ^y.

26. *For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait as he that setteth snares, they set a trap, they catch men.*

From these words, we may observe, that nothing is more offensive to the goodness, as well as purity, of God's nature, than that common, and almost uni-

^x 2 Cor. xii. 9.

^y Hosea xiii. 9.

27. *As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.*

28. *They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper: and the right of the needy do they not judge.*

29. *Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*

versal practice of out-witting and over-reaching one another in sales and bargains.

—By this art it is that men get estates, *become great, wax*

fat, and shine. But however notable and thriving such persons may seem, and hug themselves in the success of their well concerted schemes; 'tis plain that their guilt is far more heinous in the sight of God, than the open violence of rapine and oppression: *They overpass the deeds of the wicked.*—'Tis also

the common sentiment of mankind, that such underhand tricks, such *traps to*

catch men, are more base and villainous than downright theft, or open robbery on the highway.—

But though such cunning may evade the laws of man, and secure both wealth and impunity in the world, it shall not so elude the justice of God, or escape his vengeance. Nay, he therefore takes it into his immediate cognizance, because it is too subtle for human laws to judge, or punish.—*Shall not I visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*—But,

“O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto
“their assembly mine honour be not thou united.”

'Tis base and dishonourable to deceive the simple; and a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.—“Envy not therefore the op-

“pressor, and choose none of his ways.”—He that is reserved for the stroke of Almighty vengeance, is too wretched to provoke our envy; too great a

² Gen. xlix. 6.

² Prov. iii. 31.

criminal to deserve our imitation.—He that injures another, injures himself most: He is more the object of our pity, than of anger or revenge.

After such a declaration

30. *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land.* [*A wonderful and horrible thing*], one would expect to hear some very monstrous

31. *The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?* abomination, some unheard of crime; but God's judgment of things is not like ours: The most *horrible* and astonishing sight, which he beholds upon earth, is that

unhappy agreement which

too often is found between pastors and people, to deceive, and be deceived. Such a general consent and conspiracy of priests, prophets, and people, mutually to cheat and impose upon each other: The one *prophesying falsely*; the priests encouraging and applauding what they ought to condemn; and the laity better pleased with smooth and soft lies, than with honest and impartial truths! Such is the subject, if we may so speak, of a God's astonishment, and may well be the cause of our dread and fear; seeing it too often happens, within the very church herself, that the people of God take greater pleasure in false doctrine, which tickles the ear, than in sound instruction, which feeds the soul; preferring plausible falshood before the most sacred truths, which thwart their humour, or cross their interest.—To see men, in full day-light, and with their eyes open, so fond of delusion, is truly *wonderful!* to consider the effects, is truly *horrible!*



The Fourteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

JEREM. Chap. xxii.

P R E F A C E.

IN the morning Lesson was represented the great and general corruption of the Jewish people, of every rank and degree. In this chapter the prophet is charged with a like commission to the royal family of Judah. Their particular crimes he enumerates, to wit, vanity in building, oppression and violence, fraud and extortion, covetousness and injustice. He promises pardon and prosperity on their repentance; and threatens their impenitency and disobedience with extirpation, and the utter rejection of them and their posterity from reigning any more in Judah.

Particular judgments are denounced against each of those wicked kings; namely, against Shallum or Jehohaz, that he should be carried captive into Egypt, and die there; against Jehoiakim (who impiously cut in pieces the roll, which conveyed God's message to him, and burnt it in the fire), that he should die an unlamented death, and be buried with the burial of an ass. And Coniah, or Jeconiah, his son, is threatened with captivity to Babylon, and never to return.—All which judgments came to pass, as had been foretold.

The

The reflection to be drawn by all that bear these things, is plainly this: If such crimes as these have overthrow the thrones and families of the mightiest princes, how shall sinners and oppressors, of inferior quality, think to escape the punishments denounced against all such violations of the divine law.

The Fourteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

JEREM. Chap. xxii.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD, Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word,

2. And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people, that enter in by these gates;

3. Thus saith the LORD, Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.

4. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this

KINGS and magistrates are God's viceroyals; their principal business is to execute judgment and justice in the earth. If they pervert or neglect this, they abuse the authority they have received of God; they rebel against their own liege Lord and Sovereign, and violate the great end and design of their office. Yea, by degrees, they sap and weaken the foundation of their own power. For justice, in the distribution of rewards and punishments, is the firmest basis and establishment of authority, as well as most salutary and comfortable in its influences to the people. But where this is wanting, there that order and relation of superiors and in-

house, kings sitting ^a upon the throne of David, riding in chariots, and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.

5. *But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.*

inferiors, which God hath appointed in the societies of men, for their good, will inevitably tend to the detriment, if not ruin, of both.

—Kings and magistrates may here read their duty, and the terms on which they are to expect the blessing and favour of God. Their duty is specified in the third

verse, by these two words, *judgment and righteousness*, which comprehend a faithful and impartial exercise of all acts of justice, particularly the two great branches of it, positive and negative justice. The first is contained in the word *judgment*, being the administration of all positive justice and equity towards others. Namely, First, In making good laws: Secondly, In pronouncing a righteous and just sentence in judgment, pursuant to such laws: Thirdly, In a strict and impartial execution of such sentence on all offenders. And this administration of positive justice, is here exemplified in these words, *Deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor*.—The second branch of justice, which is called negative, is implied in the word *righteousness*, and concerns more immediately a man's own actions, and the regulation of his conduct and dealings towards others, so as to avoid all acts of fraud or violence: And this, in our Lesson, is particularized by, *Doing no wrong, no violence to the stranger, nor the widow, neither shedding innocent blood*.—Note, a farther and more particular enumeration of the duties of positive and negative justice, is contained in the tenth and eleventh chapters of the whole duty of man. See also Dr. Henry More's ethics, ch. 4, 5, and 6.

Thou art Gilead unto me,

6. *For thus saith the LORD unto the kings house*

&c.] Gilead was a fair and fertile province, on the other side

^a Heb. For David upon his throne.

of Judah, Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited.

7. And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons, and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire.

8. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city?

9. Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

punishment.—Judah and Israel had been the greatest favourites of heaven; distinguished, as Gilead had once been, for the blessings of peace and plenty, and exalted above other nations, like the head of Lebanon. But now, as the kingdom of Israel had already been rooted out, and destroyed, for their wickedness, so should the tribe of Judah also, and both kingdoms be reduced to a wilderness, and as cities that are not inhabited.—Hence we are taught, that the greater privileges any Church or nation enjoys, the sorer will their punishment prove, if they abuse the favour and goodness of God. The same woes shall fall on them, as are here pronounced against the Jews, and were afterwards, by our Lord, against

Caper-

204 *The Fourteenth SUNDAY* Jer. 22.

Capernaum, &c. ^a: And what may not we, of this nation, expect and fear, who are like them, both in sins and mercies! We are exalted unto heaven, by extraordinary blessings; and shall we not be brought down to hell, for our neglect and abuse of them?

10. *Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him, but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.*

11. *For thus saith the LORD touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place, He shall not return thither any more:*

12. *But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.*

Weep not for the dead, that is, for the good *Josiah*, who, though *dead*, was happy and in peace; but weep rather for his wicked son *Shallum*, who, after a very short and impious reign, was carried captive into *Egypt*, and was never to return, or see his *native country* any more. The continuance of life, to the wicked, is an heavier judgment than death itself is to the righteous. The good man hath hope in his death, how sudden or violent soever it may be, and is sure to find rest; but the ungodly are banished from God's Church here, and will be

driven from his presence hereafter; therefore their end is without hope. In the perpetuity of this expulsion of *Shallum*, from the land of his nativity, lay the sting of his punishment; especially if we take it in the mystical and spiritual meaning. According to this sense, heaven is our *native country*, and the *Jerusalem* which is from above, is the mother of us all, especially of them that are of the household of faith. Of this our heavenly country, *Eden* was the emblem before our fall: The Church is now. From *Eden* indeed, on breach of our first covenant, man was driven out, never to return or see that land any

^a *Matt. xi.*

more; but, on the terms of the second covenant, and faith in the Redeemer, he is restored to the hopes of a return to a better country^b, that is, to heaven itself, by a new birth, and re-admission into the congregation of the faithful. But if, like *Sballum*, he be cast out of this holy land of his second nativity; that is, if he hath been justly excommunicated and cut off from the Church, and die in that fearful state, he shall never return thither any more; he shall for ever be excluded from heaven, that place of our first original, and final rest: Because “there remaineth
“no more sacrifice for his sins, no further covenant
“of grace;” “but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the
“adversaries.” See *Heb.* ch. vi. ver. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. and ch. x. ver. 26.

13. *Wo unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbours service without wages, and giveth him not for his work:*

14. *That saith I will build me a wide house, and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows, and it is cieled with cedar, and painted with vermilion.*

15. *Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him?*

The prophet next addresseth his discourse to *Jehoiakim*, who succeeded *Sballum*, and was otherwise called *Jehoahaz*: He taking no warning by his brother's fall, nor forsaking the sins which had caused it, becomes also a monument of divine vengeance, and a fearful example to warn others. To his sins of idolatry and profaneness, he had added, violence, oppression, and bloodshed: But it is observable, that these acts of injustice were the effects of his *covetousness*. This vice was the root of all those evils; from hence sprung those

^b *Heb.* xi. 16.

206 *The Fourteenth SUNDAY* Jer. 22.

16. *He judged the cause of the poor and needy, then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD.*

17. *But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence to do it.*

crimes of cruelty and oppression, which violated the whole second table of the law, and broke through all the social duties, political and civil.—The love of money seems to have been that prince's natural and most predominant vice. But that which gave it the ascendant over him, and made it break out into such acts of violence against his neighbour, was his open violation of the first table of the law, and an avowed neglect of his duty towards God: So that we may say, to his idolatry was owing the breach of the first table; to his covetousness, the breach of all the second. From whence, as well as from frequent experience, we learn, that, without true religion, no man can be truly virtuous; and that he who is not just to God, will not be just or strictly honest to his neighbour.

18. *Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother, or ah sister: they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord, or ah his glory.*

19. *He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.*

The punishment here denounced against this idolatrous and oppressive king, is a punishment which could not take place till after his decease; *They shall not lament for him, &c.* he shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.—Our modern freethinkers may, if they please, deride such a punishment as this, and count it of no concern, or signification, to the party deceased, because the body is quite insensible, and cannot feel what is done to it after death. But it is plain from this, and other parts of Scripture, that what
the

the body suffers after death (although itself be insensible) is not an indifferent thing to the person it belongs to. It appears, from many passages in holy writ, and was consonant to the sentiments of heathen antiquity, that mourning and lamentation for the death of friends, as well as decent funerals, was not only a custom agreeable to the dictates both of reason and religion; but that the want of such funeral rites and mourning, was accounted some diminution (at least) of the deceased person's repose and happiness; if not a real disquiet.—That this was agreeable to the heathen theology^c, appears from the citations we have noted at the end. But the passages in Scripture, beside this that occurs in our present Lesson, are very numerous and express, where the want of burial, when threatened, or inflicted, is represented as a curse and heavy judgment; which it could not be to the deceased, if the departed spirit were not sensible of; nay, were it not sharply affected with, the indignity shewn to the body.—To good men indeed this could be no grief, because they know, whatever dishonour the body suffers in life, or after death, it will be raised again in glory. But the wicked, who have not that hope, cannot but look on the contempt, or indignities, offered to their dead bodies, as the earnest, or prelude, of those sufferings, which their bodies also shall be consigned to, when they are raised again at the last day. Besides, as all sense of the body, and root of perception, is in the soul, who knows what immediate sensation the soul hath of the insults, or injuries, offered to its body, even after death, and after all its organs of sense are broken and destroyed?—That this sense of pain may remain in the soul (at least by way of punishment to an ill man, who had placed all his happiness in his bodily senses and appetites) seems not improbable, from that known instance, that a person

^c See Annotation at the end.

whose leg hath been cut off, shall sometimes feel a pain in the foot or toe of that very leg. And, methinks, the apprehension of this sensation of bodily pain after death, should greatly alarm all carnal persons, who too freely indulge the pleasures of sense; it being, in effect, no other than stalling and feeding their bodies against the day of slaughter.—Of this see more on ch. xxxvi. ver. 30.

20. *Go up to Lebanon, and cry, and lift up thy voice in Basban, and cry from the passages: for all thy lovers are destroyed.*

21. *I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not hear: this hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.*

22. *The wind shall eat up all thy pastors; and thy lovers shall go into captivity, surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness.*

23. *O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail?*

24. *As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon*

The prophet speaks here to Jerusalem, the Hebrew verb being of the feminine gender.—Or may it not refer to Jeconiah, in reproach of his effeminacy and softness, as our Lord calls Herod a she fox^d, for his subtilty and mischievous temper? That this was the character of Jeconiah, appears from his conduct, in taking more after his mother, than after his father, the good Josiah, and acting more like a woman than a man: effeminacy in man, is a vice which God abhors; it is a degrading ourselves from what he made us, and changing our very sex. This seems forbidden in that law of Moses to the Jews, “The man shall not wear the dress of the woman.” Deut. xxii. 5.—And the contrary is commanded under the Gospel, in that of the apo-

^d See Annotation at the end.

my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence,

25. And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

stile, "endure hardness as
"a good soldier of Jesus
"Christ."

In the same stile as above, God calls *Jeconiah, inhabitress of Lebanon*, ver. 23. for so the original imports; and what follows [*how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pains of a woman in travail*] is not

only a keen sarcasm against all affected softness, whereby such effeminate men think to make themselves appear *gracious* in the eyes of the world; but a commination of the very contrary effect, which will certainly happen to them. That as they delight to appear as women, in delicacy and tenderness, so shall they suffer the pains which women are doomed to; pains equally grievous and insupportable, as the *pangs of a woman in travail*.—Nothing contributes to render affliction, or any adverse turn of fortune, more exquisitely painful, an truly miserable, than an habit of effeminacy and indolence.—He that so maketh provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, is only enfeebling his strength for temptation, and heaping up wrath against the day of wrath.—Man, saith the apostle, "is the image
"and glory of God^e."—But he is so as man, and of the nobler sex: By effeminacy he loses the divine image. And if he debase himself to the image of woman, he must likewise expect the curse that was laid upon woman, servitude, sorrow, and pain.—But, what is still more dreadful, the same apostle hath placed the effeminate among those, who "shall
"not inherit the kingdom of God^e."

Thy mother that bare thee.]

26. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that We read in 2 Kings, ch. xxiv. That "her name was Ne-

^e 2 Tim. ii. 3.

^f 1 Cor. xi. 7.

^g Ibid. Ch. vi. 9.

bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born, and there shall ye die.

27. But to the land wherunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

28. Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?

29. O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.

30. Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

mother was his sin and his punishment, and proved, in the end, to be the ruin of them both.—A loud warning this, to such parents, and such children! But, alas! the very frequent instances we meet with of the unhappy effects of a wrong education, shew, too plainly, what little attention is paid to this part of our Lesson.—This king's reign proved both short and unhappy; having such a tutorefs, no good could be expected of him. For this cause God

“*bushta*, the daughter of “*Elnathan* of *Jerusalem* :” probably an ill woman, and an idolatress. She certainly bore an ominous and most inauspicious name^h. Her son was but eighteen years old when he began to reign, and “did evil in the sight “of the Lord :” Which, in all likelihood, was owing to the education he had received under such a mother. In the history of his reign, related in that chapter, we find him twice joined with his mother: Ver. 12. it is said, “He and his mother “went out to the king of “*Babylon* ;” and, ver. 15. That “he carried away “*Jehoiachin* to *Babylon*, “and the king’s mother.” Which seems to intimate to us, that his weak attachment to a fond ungodly

^h She was probably named *Nekushta*, in memory and honour of the brazen serpent, which *Hezekiah* had so called and destroyed, because it had been abused to an idolatrous use.

threatens to pluck him thence, though he were the signet on his right hand, &c. A prince so early corrupted, and so spoiled in his youth, is also pronounced *childless*. And thus is fulfilled that saying, "Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands"¹.—Not that *Jecooniab* had no son; *Salatkiel* was his son, born afterwards in *Babylon*. But the kingdom of *David* (as to ruling any more in *Judah*) was extinct in him. So that it proved literally true, That *Jecooniab* had no son to sit upon the throne of *David* after him. The royal family, from that time, was reduced to a private condition, until the time of *Christ*, even for fourteen generations^k. And as to *Christ's* kingdom, though he was lineally descended from *David*, his kingdom was not of this world. Neither did *Christ* so directly descend by *Jecooniab*, as by *Nathan's* line, from *David*.—Nor is it unworthy our notice, that what we render here and in the 4th verse, *sitting upon the throne of David*, is more truly rendered in the margin, *sitting for David upon his throne*; that is, for *CHRIST*; for he is "King of kings, and Lord of Lords"^l; to whom all power, and all judgment, is committed; who also is often stiled *David*^m. All kings, therefore, are but his substitutes; their throne is *his* throne; they reign [*Dei gratiâ*] for him, and by his grace and favour. This our holy Church every where inculcates to us, as well as gives us excellent forms of prayer according to this doctrine; particularly those in the Communion office, which immediately follow the Commandments.—And O how happy were it for the world, how great a blessing both to prince and people, did all kings consider, "Whose ministers they are:" did all subjects regard them as the ministers of God, and "consider whose authority they have!"

¹ Prov. xiv. 1.^k Matt. j. 17.^l Rev. xix. 16.^m See Ezek. xxxiv. 23, &c.

212 *The Fourteenth SUNDAY, &c. Jer. 22.*

On ver. 18, 19. *Agreeable to the heathen theology.*] That this was so, appears from that passage in *Homer*, *Iliad* XXIII. Where the ghost of *Patroclus* is introduced complaining that his funeral rites had not been performed;

——— “ Thus the phantom said,
 “ Sleeps my *Achilles*, his *Patroclus* dead?
 “ Living, I seem’d his dearest, tend’rest care;
 “ But now, forgot, I wander in the air.
 “ Let my pale corse the rites of burial know,
 “ And give me entrance in the realms below.
 “ Till then, the spirit finds no resting place,
 “ But here and there th’ unbody’d spectres chafe,
 “ The vagrant dead around the dark abode,
 “ Forbid to pass th’ irremeable flood.”

On which *Mr. Pope* remarks, it was the common opinion of the antients, that the souls of the departed were not admitted into the number of the happy, till the bodies had received the funeral rites. They supposed, those that wanted them, wandered about an hundred years, before they were waisted over the infernal river.—*Virgil* also hath the same sentiment, concerning the state of departed souls; at least had in his view the above passage of *Homer*.

*Hæc omnis quam cernis, inops inhumatæque turba est, &c.**

Thus *Englisht* by *Dryden*,

“ The ghosts, rejected, are the unhappy crew,
 “ Depriv’d of sepulchres and funeral due.
 “ An hundred years they wander on the shore,
 “ At length, their penance done, they’re waisted o’er.

Ver. 20. *A she fox.*] Ἀλώπηξ ταῖτη, *Luke* xiv. 32. which is put in the feminine gender, to denote *Herod*’s mischievous craft and subtilty. So in *Homer*, the *Greeks*, in reproach of their cowardice, are called women, not men, Ἀχαιῖδες ἥν τε Ἀχαιοί, persons degenerated from all manly courage and virtue. We find the same figure in the prophet, *Nabum* iii. 13. “ Thy people in the midst of thee
 “ are women.”

* See the rest in the *ÆNEID*, Book VI.



The Fifteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

JEREMIAH, Chap. xxxv.

P R E F A C E.

WE have, in this chapter, not only a Lesson of strict temperance, but a singular example of obedience to paternal authority.

The Rechabites total abstinence from wine, and the common conveniencies, as well as luxuries, of life, was improved into a more exalted degree of virtue, by their pious observance of it in obedience to the command of their father Jonadab.

How acceptable such a dutiful compliance with the injunctions of our parents is to God, appears by the blessing pronounced and intailed on this family (ver. 19.): That it should not only be preserved by the special protection of Providence, but be so perpetuated, as not to want a man to stand before God FOR EVER. And the history of this family, as far as we can trace it, confirms the truth of this promised blessing. See remark on ver 19.

But there is a more special use, which we Gentile Christians may draw from this example.

These Rechabites were descended from the Kenites (i. e. from Jethro, the father-in law of Moses, who was a Midianite), and so not naturally, but spiritually, of the

seed of Abraham; being of the same faith and Church, as Proselytes; but not of the same progeny, with the Jews. Herein they were the emblems and types of the Gentile Church, even of Us the adopted children of Abraham; whom therefore the Apostle calls, "The wild olive ingrafted into the true"^a.—Of these Kenites we read in Judges i. 16. That "they went up out of the city of palm-trees, with the children of Judah, into the wilderness of Judah."

Their abstemious and austere course of life is a pattern therefore to us, of mortification and self denial. They lived in the world, as not of the world; as pilgrims and travellers, expedite and disengaged from all its pleasures, as well as incumbrances; in a constant readiness to remove their station, where-ever Providence should call them. These, probably, or such as these, were the reasons why their ancestor Jonadab had obliged them to lead such an ascetic and abstinent life.—How much more ought we to live soberly, and be temperate in all things, whom our Master Christ, whom all our spiritual ancestors, the Apostles, Saints, and Martyrs, who have gone before us, have, by precept and example, admonished, "To keep ourselves unspotted from the world; not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world; because the love of the world is enmity against God; that we are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world; that, though we live in the flesh, we should not walk after the flesh; that we cannot serve God and mammon."

These, and many more admonitions of like import, which are duly repeated to us by our spiritual parents, the Church, and her teachers, cannot but lay us under much stronger obligations to obedience, than the injunctions of a mere man [Jonadab, the son of Rechab] did his house and descendants. Especially when we reflect on that solemn promise we have all made in our baptism, of "renouncing the vain pomps and glory of the world, with

^a Rom. xi. 17.

“ all the covetous desires of the same, and carnal desires
 “ of the flesh, so as not to follow, nor be led by, them.”—
 When we also consider, that it was upon this very condition we were admitted into the house and family of Christ; and that all our right and title to the privileges and blessings of it depends on a faithful discharge of those engagements.

That the Church intended to recommend this use of the example before us, seems very plain from her choice of the gospel for this day, where our Lord warns us, “ To take
 “ no thought for our life, what we shall eat, or what we
 “ shall drink; nor for our body what we shall put on^b;” but to leave these worldly accommodations to the wise care and providence of our heavenly Father; either to bestow or withhold them, as he shall see best.—And whoso desires to have his meditations assisted and enlarged on this most useful doctrine of self-denial, and sitting loose to the pleasures and the cares of the world, may read what Dean Stanhope saith in his comment on the gospel, especially what falls in with the instruction contained in the Lesson now before us.—“ We are not, as he rightly observes, by any express law of our Lord’s; forbidden the
 “ use and enjoyment of the conveniencies or comforts of
 “ life” (nor was the interdiction of wine, &c. imposed on the Rechabites by a divine, but only by an human, law):
 “ But, as he proceeds, there is a great deal of danger in
 “ indulging even a lawful regard and concern for the
 “ things of the world, because they are too apt to gain
 “ upon our hearts, and engage our affections further than
 “ is consistent with that love of God, and heavenly-mindedness, which ought to be the supreme and governing principle in every Christian. That, without a perfect indifference to, and disengagement from, the enjoyments,
 “ and even the necessaries, of life, we shall never be able
 “ to stand the trial when temptation arises; but be in danger of falling either into injustice or covetousness, when
 “ the world puts unlawful advantages within our reach;

^b Matt. vi.

*" or of murmuring and discontent, when it strips us of
" those we were formerly possessed of."*

The way, therefore, to secure our hearts against the hazards of any such experiment, which it shall please the wisdom of Providence to make upon us, is, seriously to attend to, and imitate, the example of the pious Rechabites, who, when pots full of wine and cups were set before them, and the prophet, by God's particular command, bad them drink, they refused, and said, we will not drink wine.

The temptation, we see, was not only present, with every circumstance of convenience, as well as plenty, to invite a compliance; but was enforced, and their compliance, as it were, authorized by the command of a prophet; yet, we find, that, as the temptation itself made no impression on their virtue; so neither did they think, that even a permission, and seeming command, from Heaven, was a sufficient warrant for dispensing with their obedience to the positive command of their Father.

As this their firmness of virtue and resolution, their remarkable temperance, and inviolable attachment to the injunction of their father, ministered just cause of reproach against the Jewish nation, who had broken through all the positive commands of God, and their own most solemn engagements; much more ought all revolting and disobedient Christians to expect that these sons of Rechab will rise up in the judgment against such a faithless and perverse generation, and condemn them.

The Fifteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

JEREMIAH, Chap. xxxv.

An example of strict temperance:—The praise and reward of filial obedience.

1. **T**HE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying;

2. Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.

HERE God tempteth the Rechabites: He also tempted Abraham, Gen. xxii. 1. And yet, St. James assures us, "That God tempteth no man^c." How is this to be reconciled?—Why, it is the end and design, by which the temptations of any kind are to be distinguished.—The action, to which a man is tempted,

either by the good or evil spirit, may be the very same (as in the case of David's numbering the people; compare 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. and 1 Chron. xxi. 1.); but, in the end or design, there is this wide and material difference; God, in every trial, wills our victory; the devil, our defeat: The one acts as our friend, the other as an enemy. God leads us into temptation (as he did his own Son into the wilderness to be tempted), that so we may have the opportunity of approving our virtue, and winning the crown; and so be delivered from evil, even the greatest of all evils, eternal death. But every temptation of Satan is a trap and a snare to our virtue, that we may fall into evil, and so be undone. This dis-

^c Jam. i. 13.

injunction solves the seeming difficulty; so that we may, from hence, the better apprehend the sense of that petition in our Lord's Prayer, That God would *not lead us into temptation*; and likewise of that seemingly strange advice of the Apostle, That we should "count" it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations^d. Hence then, we may see two reasons, why God is here pleased to tempt or try the obedience of these *Rechabites*: The one was, for their own greater advantage and improvement; the other was, that their fidelity, and firm adherence to the injunction of their ancestor, might be rendered more conspicuous, and provoke the *Jews* to emulate their virtue.—To conclude, the justice of God requires the trial of our obedience, in order to prove, whether it be sincere;—therefore temptation is necessary:—And herein, his goodness seeks a double good; First, our own profit, and then the benefit of others;—therefore it is useful. So that we have cause, with *St. Paul*, to "glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." We have good cause therefore to rejoice, as *St. James* advises, when we fall into such temptations.

3. *Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniab, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites.*

4. *And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igda-*

In the Morning Proper Lesson for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity, we find mention of *Jonadab*, who was the first institutor of this extraordinary abstinence; yet his descendants are not stiled from him, but from his father *Rechab*: Which seems no small mark of his humility, as well as respect

^d *Jam. i. 2.*

liab a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door.

5. *And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites, pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.*

and holy an institution, he leaves it to his father *Rechab*; he covets not to perpetuate his own name, but the name of his father, and the virtue of his posterity. A worthy example for the founders of any new improvements in knowledge or virtue, and for every true servant of God to imitate. The Apostles, and all good men, have set the same pattern; therein pursuing the precept of our Lord, “Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father, &c.” And again, “Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren^f.”

6. *But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, for ever.*

7. *Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents, that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.*

for his father, in that he chose to have them distinguished by his father's name rather than his own. The heads of new sects are generally ambitious of imposing their own names on their disciples and followers: So all heretics, both antient and modern. But *Jonadab* seeks no such distinction. If there were any honour in so strict

and holy an institution, he leaves it to his father *Rechab*; he covets not to perpetuate his own name, but the name of his father, and the virtue of his posterity. A worthy example for the founders of any new improvements in knowledge or virtue, and for every true servant of God to imitate. The Apostles, and all good men, have set the same pattern; therein pursuing the precept of our Lord, “Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father, &c.” And again, “Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren^f.”

It was about three hundred years since *Jonadab* had laid this inhibition on his children; and we here see how inviolably they had observed it for so long a time. —A great reproach this, not only to the *Jewish* nation, whom God in this Lesson upbraids with this instance of strict obedience; but to us Christians, who have shamefully departed from the commands of our Lord and

^e Matt. v. 16.

^f Ch. xxiii. 8.

8. *Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father, in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters;*

9. *Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed.*

10. *But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.*

generally, so lightly infringed? What is this owing to, but the treachery and corruption of the heart of man, which is apter to submit to the dictates of flesh and blood, in an Equal of the same nature, than to the law of the spirit of life. This carnal propension, to which all men are so subject, was the cause of those frequent lapses of God's own people into idolatry; and is therefore, by some of the fathers, assigned as one reason, why Christ assumed the human nature, and a visible body, that so, appearing as man amongst men, his precepts and example might obviate and cure that wrong bias of our nature, and make the more lasting impression on our hearts, by condescending, in some measure, to the infirmity of our natural desires.

It might be objected, how
11. *But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar king* then came it to pass, that they had quitted their tents,

^z *Mahomet* forbade the use of Wine.

^h *Pythagoras* ————— of Flesh.

ⁱ Head of the Quakers forbade the use of both the Sacraments.

^k *Calvin* ————— of Episcopacy, &c.

of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come and let us go to Jerusalem, for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

and lived at Jerusalem? This objection is here prevented and solved. And we do not find their dispensing with that part of their founder's order, in relation to their living in tents (seeing it was for the sake of self-preservation

in a time of war) is at all imputed as a fault, or breach of rule.—By this, we see God is no rigid judge in cases of necessity: That all human institutions, even in divine things, are, in their nature, mutable, and may, by a like or competent authority, be altered, or dispensed with, where the grounds are just and reasonable. Nothing but the moral laws of God are unchangeable, and admit of no dispensation.

12. *Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,*

13. *Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Go, and tell the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD.*

14. *The words of Joadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their fathers commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early, and speaking, but ye hearkened not unto me.*

The drinking of wine is a thing, in its nature indifferent, nay, sometimes, necessary, and allowed as a cordial for the stomach's sake (see 1 Tim. v. 25.), as well as highly grateful to the taste, and making glad the heart of man. Sin, on the contrary, admits of no indifference; the Law of God hath positively forbidden it: In its nature, it is destructive of soul and body; ruinous to our peace, our comfort, our happiness both temporal and eternal. The only temptation to it, is its gratefulness to corrupted nature, to a vitiated taste, and irregular appetite: Yet, for the sake of indulging these, the sinner forfeits all the advantages

tages and rewards of virtue; breaks through the strictest ties of duty, and most solemn engagements, in contempt of God, his promises, or his threatenings; and profanely sells, as *Esau* did, his very birthright, his prospect of Heaven, and eternal felicity, for a morsel of meat, a momentary pleasure, a mere trifle, a toy, a cheat.—Is it possible, that men, a whole body of men, could so unanimously, so constantly, for the space of three hundred years together, renounce the taste of an innocent, a grateful liquor, in obedience to a man; and, that Christians, God's own people, members of Christ's sacred body, should not abstain from the pleasures of sin for a day, for an hour!—O strange perverseness of human nature! O most abused goodness of God!—How ought the reflection to sting our conscience, and shame us into obedience!

15. *I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early, and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land, which I have given to you, and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkned unto me.*

is it to resist so many
vengeance of God be
dience!

16. *Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father,*

Nor have we the least plea or excuse to offer for our sin: The only allowable one, that of ignorance, is taken away by the frequent remonstrances, the repeated admonitions, the continual reproofs, which God makes by his Holy Spirit, by his word, by his ministers, by our own consciences; so that, early and late, the sinner has the knowledge and the danger of his crimes sounded in his ears. What a madness

calls! How just must the
for such obstinate disobedience!

The punishment of sin unrepented of, will not only bear a proportion to the nature of it, but likewise to the opportunities and means of grace,

which he commanded them ; but this people hath not hearkned unto me :

17. *Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard, and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.*

18. *And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you :*

19. *Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.*

grace, which have been neglected or despised.—The contempt of mercy is one of the highest aggravations of guilt. And nothing can be more just than that he should have judgment without mercy, who refuses even to accept of mercy ; who will shew no mercy,—no, not to himself.

Of so great price, in the sight of God, is the virtue of filial duty and obedience, that it shall not miss its reward even in this world.—The law, which enjoins it, has a promise of long life annexed thereto: And, by this history of the *Rechabites*, we may learn, that the surest way to intail a blessing on our children, and to perpetuate our names and families in a numerous and virtuous issue, is to reverence and obey our own parents.—

Worldly persons value themselves on the Nobility and Greatness of their ancestors; but the servants of God place their glory in the Virtue of their predecessors, and the piety of their descendants. So that all good parents are more solicitous to leave a good, than a rich and powerful, posterity, and to transmit true Piety, rather than great Estates, to their children ; esteeming it more honourable to perpetuate virtue in their families, than

wealth

wealth and grandeur: And the fear of God, rather than their own names and memories in a long and lasting succession of descendants. Yet, even in this, God is often pleased to bless them: He seldom suffers the seed of the righteous to fail; his providence, for the most part, taking a special care to continue the issue, as well as virtues, of those, who have taken pains to propagate those virtues to their children and families.—*Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.* This assurance of protection to him and his posterity was remarkably made good to this family, amidst all the confusions and judgments which soon after fell upon the *Jewish* nation: For, as they had now found a place of refuge at *Jerusalem* from the danger of the *Chaldean* army; so afterwards, in the general desolation of that country, and captivity of the people; it is certain these *Rechabites* were preserved, though we know not the particular manner of their deliverance. For, by history, we find there were great numbers of them in our Saviour's time: That they were the chief hearers and followers of Christ, the first and readiest embracers of the Gospel. They were then called, by way of distinction, *the Poor*, from their professed poverty [*"To the poor the Gospel is preached," Luke vii. 22.*] They were also called, *The Good*, from their eminent goodness [*"For a good man one would even dare to die," Rom. v. 7.*] They had changed their names indeed from *Rechabites* to *Ebionites*, *Esseni*, *Cbasidim*, or *Affideans*, which signify the same as poor and good men. But these new names (not assumed by themselves, but given by others) shew, that their virtue was the same; and continued as eminent and remarkable as ever. And as these were the first converts to Christianity, and in general received the Gospel; it is much to be noted how this promise of God by his prophet, That they *should never want a man to stand before him*, was performed, and made good, to this family. It was indeed verified both in a literal and
a spi-

a spiritual sense, both in worldly and an heavenly meaning, the race being preserved until the time of Christ, and then incorporated unto him as the Head of the Church, and adopted into that family, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, nor any period of time extinguish.





The Fifteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

JEREMIAH, Chap. xxxvi.

P R E F A C E.

AS all things are best illustrated by their contraries, 'tis observable that our Church takes here (as often elsewhere) the like method in the choice of her Proper Lessons for the Morning and Evening service of this Day, that so she may the better set off the beauty, as well as obligation, of obedience, from the opposite shade and deformity of vice.

In the Morning Lesson was exhibited to us a pattern of the most uniform obedience, in the example of the Rechabites: In this is set before us the very reverse, in the conduct and character of the king and people of the Jews; that, by comparing the one with the other, we may be the more strongly incited to eschew the evil, and chuse the good.

The Fifteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

JEREMIAH, Chap. xxxvi.

1. *AND it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,*

2. *Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.*

3. *It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity, and their sin.*

ALmighty God omits no means for the reclaiming of sinners from the error of their ways.—The sermons, and verbal admonitions of the prophet had no effect: God commands him to reduce them to writing, and to cause the book so written, to be read in the ears of the people, and that too on a public fasting-day, in order to make the deeper impression on their minds.—But although the word so written had no better success than it had when spoken,

“nor profited them to
“whom it was preached,
“because not mixed with
“faith in them that heard
“it;” and though God doubtless foresaw that it would so happen, yet was not this procedure of di-

vine wisdom without its due effect; not only as it magnifies the patience, and wonderful mercy, of God, in essaying all possible methods for reforming mankind, and justifies his vengeance in the punishment of that stubborn people; but, as the committing of his word to writing hath perpetuated the knowledge of

his will, by the Scriptures, to all succeeding generations; even to us, on whom the ends of the world are come; that so both a sense of his forbearance and long-suffering, as well as the dread of his justice, may lead us to repentance.

4. *Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah; and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.*

5. *And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up, I cannot go into the house of the LORD.*

6. *Therefore go thou and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people, in the LORD's house, upon the fasting-day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah, that shall come out of their cities.*

7. *It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way; for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against his people.*

8. *And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in*

What the particular impediment was, which detained the prophet from appearing in person, and speaking himself to the people, is uncertain. But that he was not, at that time, in prison, as the words seem to import, is plain from the message sent him by the princes (ver. 19.) That he, and Baruch, should *hide themselves, and let no man know where they were*; which could not be, had he been now in confinement, and shut up in a prison.—But whatever restraint the prophet was under, we may observe the word of God is not bound.—God will ever find a way to declare his will to men, “that he may be justified in his saying.”—He will make known his pleasure to us, whether we will receive it or no; “that he may be clear when he is judged.”—He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth, and his word runneth very swiftly; nothing can stop its course.—Tho’ our perverse passions may hinder its effect, they shall not

the book the words of the LORD in the LORDs house.

9. *And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem.*

10. *Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORDs house, in the ears of all the people.*

still small voice of peace, and the overtures of mercy, it shall be forced to hear the thunder of his justice.—“The word of God will not return unto him void, but will accomplish that which he pleaseth, and will prosper in the thing whereto he sendeth it^a.”—If we will not hear it to save us, we shall surely hear it to condemn.

11. *When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD.*

not obstruct its sound. Its sound therefore is gone out into all lands, and his words unto the end of the world. If the prophet, or apostle, be shut up, another shall supply his place; if the word spoken be hindered or confined, the word written shall find a way; if the word written be destroyed, cut in pieces, or cast into the fire, another roll, a second, a third, edition shall come forth, to convey the same contents to our ears.—If to his Scripture we turn a deaf ear, or shut our eyes, he can, when he will, speak to our hearts, or engrave his word on those fleshly tables. But if our conscience refuse to hear the voice of the charmer, if it reject the

The word of God hath a powerful irresistible force, which will make the proudest heart to stoop, whenever he pleases, and the stubbornest sinner to quake with

^a *Isaiah* lv.

12. *Then he went down into the kings house, into the scribes chamber, and lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.*

13. *Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people.*

14. *Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them.*

15. *And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears.*

16. *Now it came to pass when they had heard all the words, they were afraid, both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words.*

produce a genuine and true repentance, 'till we hate the sin itself, as well as its effects; 'till we abhor the acts

fear.—When St. Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, *Felix* trembled.—

The *Mene Tekel* strikes *Belsazzar* with horror in the midst of his revels. And here, the whole council of *Jehoiakim* are seized with fear at the words of the prophet; yet we do not find that any

of these returned from their evil ways.—There is no man so hardned, as not sometimes to feel the terrors of conscience, though he will not repent.—The word of God is

a two-edged sword: It wounds the carnal, as well as the spiritual part of man. But if our fear proceed no

further than a mere conviction, 'tis but the fear and faith of devils;—they believe,—and tremble.—Fear is indeed a good beginning

of wisdom, and a right step towards it; but it is not any part of wisdom itself: It serves to condemn, but

not to amend. And the reason is, because nature it-

self cannot help being afraid of danger. Like a slave, it

hates and dreads the lash, tho' it hug the fault. But

no fear of punishment can

acts

acts and habits of vice, as well as the danger.—And this is the sole gift of the Spirit of God.

By the answer of *Baruch*, we may see the reason why the word of God is sometimes called the *SCRIPTURE*, and sometimes the *ORACLES* of God.—It was called *Scripture* [or *writing*], because written (as it is here said), *with ink in a book*; and oracles, because *pronounced with the mouth* (as the word

17. *And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth?*
 18. *Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book.*

oracle^b imports), by the prophet, or person inspired, before it was committed to writing. So we read,—“The Lord spake unto *Moses*,—*Moses* to the people;” and then he wrote all the words of the Lord^c.—Here, *Jeremiah* speaks, and *Baruch* writes.—But to convince us, that it was not his word, the word of *Jeremiah*, who spake, nor of *Baruch*, who wrote, but the Lord’s, we are to observe, that the *Hebrew* word, which (ver. the 18th of our Lesson) we render *pronounced*, doth also signify to *read*. Whereby it is intimated to us, that what the prophet uttered *with his mouth*, was verily and indeed oracular: God dictating the same unto him, and his mouth being but the organ to pronounce the Divine inspiration. Yea, that what he uttered *with his mouth* was from an inward writing, a divine impression on his mind, which the Holy Ghost had first charactered and imprinted there. And this internal writing was so legible to the prophet, that he pronounced it as readily, as if he was reading out of a book [*loquebatur quasi legens*]. “He spake as one reading,” as the vulgar *Latin* most expressively renders it.—And may we not say, that this manner of revelation by legible characters on

^b Oracle takes its etymology from the *Latin* word *Os*, a mouth.

^c *Exod.* xxiv. 4.

the heart (as well as by dreams), gave occasion to prophecy's being called a vision, and the prophets to be stiled seers? The things, which God was pleased to reveal to his servants the prophets, being, as it were, visibly written on the table of their hearts, so as to be seen by them, and read.—And shall not we, if we give ourselves up to be taught of GOD, shall not we also have his holy will, that sure word of prophecy, inscribed by his finger on our hearts, so that we also shall “speak as the oracles of God^d.”—To conclude, what regard and veneration ought we not to pay to the holy Scriptures, which have been thus dictated by the very Spirit of God; thus uttered and written by holy men, as they were moved by him, and immediately inspired by the Holy Ghost^e!

19. *Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go hide thee, thou and Jeremiah, and let no man know where ye be.*

20. *And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king.*

21. *So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll, and he took it out of Elishama the scribes chamber, and Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes, which stood beside the king.*

22. *Now the king sat in the winter-house, in the ninth month: and there was a fire*

Here we have a sad example of infidelity and impenitence, in every rank and degree of an abandoned people!—All the words of the Lord had been read by *Baruch in the Lord's house* (ver. 8.) The same prophecy, containing a dreadful denunciation of judgments against the whole nation, had afterwards been read by him *in the ears of all the people* (ver. 10.), and that on the very *fasting-day*, which seems to have been appointed on purpose for humiliation and deprecating the Divine wrath. And yet we hear of no awakenings of conscience, no signs of a true repentance, amongst any of them.

^d 1 Pet. iv. 11.

^e Rom. i. 11.

on the hearth burning before him.

23. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.

24. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants, that heard all these words.

25. Nevertheless, Elnathan, and Delaiah, and Gemariah, had made intercession to the king, that he would not burn the roll, but he would not hear them.

—It is again read to all the princes, that is, the king's privy council. They indeed shew some concern, some sense of fear, and consult the safety of Baruch, and the prophet. But the impression was too slight to produce any reformation.—At last it is read to the king himself; but he is so far from expressing the least sign of repentance, that he has not patience to hear it out, cuts the roll in pieces, and throws it into the fire.—Monstrous impiety! desperate wickedness!—And what could inspire this evil king with such aversion to the book of God, but his hatred of the truths which it contained? And this is still the cause of that prejudice and contempt, wherewith the Holy Bible is treated by ill men. The wicked hate it, because it condemns their wicked deeds. The proud despise it, because it contradicts their carnal reason, as foolish, or incredible: The covetous deride it, because it reproves their darling passion, the love of money.—The like may be said of other sinners; the envious, the drunkard, the glutton, the unclean, &c. In a word, the men of false religion, as Papists, Socinians, &c. and men of no religion, as Atheists and Deists: All these are against the Scripture, because the Scripture is against them. For this reason, they cut it with their penknives; that is, they wound its authority, by sharp and railing invectives, or mutilate its sacred truths, by false and perverse constructions.—They burn it in the fire on their hearth; that is, in those

those fierce disputes, and uncharitable heats, which a fiery zeal, without knowledge, has kindled in the Church.—But it is the letter only that is thus torn and consumed. The word itself, the substance and spirit that is in the Scriptures, can never be destroyed. One jot, or one tittle, of this shall not pass away, 'till all be fulfilled.—The written word, like its author, the eternal and co-essential word, hath its two natures; the outward and visible, the inward and divine. The external body may suffer, as our Lord's humanity did; may be perverted, tortured, crucified; but the sacred truths therein contained are impassible as his divinity, and cannot be vacated, and made of none effect, by all the malice of men, or devils.

Here we are told, that

26. *But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Sbelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe, and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD bid them.*

when the king sought for Jeremiah and Baruch, with design, very probably, to put them to death, God is pleased to *hide them*; and thereby screened them from his fury. But afterwards (ch. xxxvii.) we read, that the prophet was seized, beaten, and put

into a dungeon; but there God supports him with strength and patience to undergo his sufferings. Such is the master that good men serve! He can, when he sees fit, *hide them* from the malice of their enemies; or enable them to undergo it: He can secure them from danger; or support them under it. What need we then be anxious or afraid, if we have him for our friend and defender?

If we reflect on these

27. *Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah (after that the king had burnt the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote*

threatnings of God against Jehoiakim for his impious malice to God's word, That *his body should be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night*

at the mouth of Jeremiah), saying,

28. *Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burnt.*

29. *And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD, Thou hast burnt this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?*

30. *Therefore thus saith the LORD, of Jehoiakim king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.*

31. *And I will punish him and his seed, and his servants, for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them, but they hearkened not.*

32. *Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son*

night to the frost, that is, be deprived of burial; or, as elsewhere expressed (ch. xxii.) be "buried with the burial of an ass, drawn, and cast forth, beyond the gates of Jerusalem," without any lamentation for him, or the least funeral solemnity; we may be assured, that the treatment our bodies shall meet with, after death, is not so indifferent a thing as our modern sceptics pretend. Cast it, say they, where you please; a ditch, a dunghill, a grave; it matters not.—But here God himself denounces this very case, as a judgment which should befall this wicked king, for one of the most enormous crimes; that, after his decease, his body should be deprived of burial, and lie exposed to the heat by day, and to the frost by night. It is true, the body, when dead, is not sensible of such indignities; but what must necessarily be inferred is, that the soul, in which existed all the principles of life and sense, survives the body, and consequently is affected with whatever is inflicted upon it, when it comes as a judgment from God; it being

of Neriah, who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah, all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burnt in the fire, and there were added besides unto them many like words.

being an earnest of those future torments, which it shall be doomed to undergo after its resurrection. The soul, which, in life, had placed its chief happiness in the pleasures and gratifications of sense, and knows it must be united to the body again,

cannot but look on these beginnings of sorrow, and tokens of Divine vengeance against it, with infinite horror and concern.—As for any indignities offered to the body after death, if they happen in the cause of God, and for his sake, it is not to be doubted, but that this will be rather cause of joy to the soul; because a blessing is promised to all that suffer, and are persecuted for righteousness sake; and that therefore, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal part hath put on immortality, the body shall receive a greater and more exceeding weight of glory for whatever it shall have endured for the sake of God and his truth.—

It may teach us also the reverence that is due to all bodies when dead, especially of Christians; whose bodies were dedicated, in baptism, to God, and were made the temples of the Holy Ghost. So that they are no longer ours, but his, who purchased them with his blood, and sanctified them with his Spirit. Whosoever therefore defiles these temples, while living, by sins of uncleanness, or, after death, shall abuse them, by any indignity, or contemptuous usage, him shall God destroy. 'Tis a most heinous sacrilege, a profanation, which nature itself abhors, and the word of God most evidently condemns. We may therefore most assuredly conclude, that such sentiments as too many now-a-days express, in contempt of the body, when deceased, are not only rash and inconsiderate, but highly impious, and no small mark of infidelity, and a profane spirit.—But this has been noted before, on the Evening Lesson for last Sunday.

The



The Sixteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

EZEKIEL, Chap. ii.

P R E F A C E.

THE prophet Ezekiel was in Chaldea with the Jews, who had been carried captives thither with king Jehoiachin, about eleven years before Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, and burnt the city and temple.

He was contemporary, for some time, with Jeremiah; and the purport of his prophecies, with respect to the general corruption of that people, and the judgments which were to befall them, is much the same with that prophet's.

Divine judgment had already begun to take hold of them; and to execute, in part, those severe comminations of Almighty vengeance, which both these prophets had denounced.

But (as appears by our Lesson, and what should warm our affections towards God for his infinite benignity) in the midst of judgment, we see he still remembered mercy. Those, whom he had driven into captivity, and banished into a strange land, he did not utterly cast off, nor discontinue the offers and means of grace, by his servants the prophets. This should teach us, neither to despair of pardon
our-

ourselves, after the commission of the greatest crimes, nor of the conversion of others, so as to cease our endeavours for their reformation.

The perverseness of mankind, in standing out against the clearest revelations of the Divine will, and threatenings against sin, is indeed surprising; But the great and unwearied goodness of God is no less wonderful, in soliciting us still, by his ministers, to return, and to accept of pardon and mercy. Nay, as St. Paul represents his own office, and the astonishing condescension of Divine philanthropy, in beseeching us^a, by his ambassadors, to be reconciled to God^b.

But we may say, the justice, as well as benignity, of the Divine nature, doth necessarily require such a procedure with men; it being in itself most highly equitable, that, in case we continue obstinate, there may be no room left for excuse: So “that God may be justified in his saying, and overcome when he is judged^c.”

This seems to be the reason of his sending Ezekiel to the reprobate Jews at Babylon: He knew they were most rebellious, and would not hear him; yet this reason of the mission is assigned,——That they may know there has been a prophet among them. For the word of God will have its effect, and prove either salutary or destructive, according to the reception we give it. Whom it cannot amend, it will judge and condemn: “For, as the rain

^a *Beseeching us, &c.*] This sentiment is so well and so piously expressed by our *British* poets, that we hope the following lines will not be unacceptable to the reader.

O what a desperate load of sin had we,
When God must *plot* for our felicity!
When God must *beg* us that he may forgive,
And die himself, before mankind could live!
And what still are we, when our king in vain
Begs his lost rebels to be friends again!
What floods of love proceed from Heaven's smile,
At once to pardon, and to reconcile! Mrs. K. Phillips.

^b 2 Cor. v. 20.

^c Ps. li.

“ cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth
 “ not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it
 “ bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower,
 “ and bread to the eater; so shall my word be, that goeth
 “ forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void;
 “ but it shall accomplish that which I pleased, and prosper
 “ in the thing whereto I send it^a;”—either to convert
 or punish; to save or to destroy.

The particular virtue recommended in this Lesson, is religious fortitude; and this the preachers of God's word have special need of, both in the discharge of their duty, and, if called thereto, in suffering for it.—But this having been spoken to elsewhere, it need only be observed, that this part of our Lesson falls in with the Epistle for this day, wherein the apostle encourages his Ephesian converts to bear up undauntedly under the persecutions they were exposed to for the sake of Christ; and earnestly prays Almighty God “ to strengthen them with might by his Spirit “ in the inner man^c.”

By the roll of the book, which was sent unto the prophet, we are to understand the Holy Scripture. First, That it is the word of God, and not the word of man: That it was delivered to the prophets, or holy penmen of the Bible (as this roll was to Ezekiel, and as the little book was delivered to St. John, Rev. x.) by a hand, or angel, from heaven; that is to say, was given by inspiration^d, and was not the product of their own brain or invention.—“ For the prophecy came not in old time by the “ will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were “ moved by the Holy Ghost^e.”

Secondly, That the word of God carries in it a two-fold sense, an external and internal, a literal and spiritual. This is signified to us by the roll's being written within and without. But neither of these senses can be understood, except it be unfolded and opened by a diligent and careful perusal.

^d Isa. lv.

^e Eph. iii. 13.

^f 2 Tim. iii. 16.

^g 2 Pet. i. 21.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, That the bare reading of the Scripture is so far from ministring any comfort or delight to a carnal liver, that it rather excites his fears, and terrifies his conscience.—Natural reason can see nothing there but lamentation, and mourning, and woe.

Fourthly, That it is faith only which converts it into wholesome food and nourishment.—Meditation, like the mouth of the soul, finds a taste therein as sweet as honey. So that what appeared to natural sense like Job's "sorrowful meat"^h,"—not only unsavory, but disgustful, proves to the spiritual man, in the chewing and ruminating thereon, to be most delightful and pleasant.—Such a one can say with David,—“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, more than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honeycombⁱ.”

To conclude, This Sunday falling in generally with one of the Ember Seasons, which the Church hath appointed for the ordination of her clergy, no Lesson could be more proper than this. And then, with respect to the occasion, it sets before her candidates for holy orders the several virtues and qualifications requisite to the office of a true pastor, and faithful minister of God,

1. *A divine commission;*
2. *The co-operation of the Holy Spirit;*
3. *A faithful and uniform obedience;*
4. *Holy and unshaken fortitude;*
5. *Diligent study, and meditation of the Holy Scriptures.*

^h Chap. vi. 7.

ⁱ Ps. xix.

The Sixteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

EZEKIEL, Chap. ii.

1. *AND he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.* IN the foregoing chapter the prophet had seen a most wonderful vision, representing the providence of Almighty God in the government of the world; and concluding with that more admirable scene, the redemption of mankind (ver. 26.), in which all the other designs of Providence do terminate and center. He was so overcome with the majesty, the glory, the goodness, of the Divine œconomy, that he falls prostrate on the ground, in a holy astonishment, and most profound humility.

—This humble posture of soul and body, (this self-abasement of the whole man) as it was the most natural and proper effect of those high and rapturous contemplations, so it most fitly disposed him for the sacred commission and office of a prophet; for a due reception of the Holy Spirit, and for “hearing the voice of him that spake from heaven.” (ver. 28.)

—Note we also, for our common instruction, that the view of God’s most glorious works of providence and redemption, as displayed to us in the mirror of divine vision, the word of faith, and not in the dark glass of our own reason and opinions, is the only sure way to know him aright; that the knowledge of his infinite perfections is the best and only source of true devotion, and true humility: His greatness shews our littleness: The higher our conceptions rise of *his* excellencies, the lower and juster will be the conceit of our *own*. — Here then are we to fix the standard of adoration and humility; of the

right knowledge of God and ourselves, wherein all true religion, our wisdom, and our happiness, consist.

Son of man, stand upon thy feet and I will speak unto thee.]—As *son of man*, frail fallen man, what posture so fit as groveling on the earth,—confounded at the glory of God's presence, and his own wretchedness? But then, whom the sense and awe of Divine justice casts down, Divine mercy will assuredly lift up.—

“He that humbleth himself, shall be exalted ^k.”—

“Even as a man feareth, so is thy displeasure ^l.”—

But if prostration be the proper posture of a penitent, we may observe, that *standing up* is the posture most suitable for receiving the commands of God,—for action,—for obedience.—Howbeit, to quit the stations of penitents, 'till God speak peace, and bid us rise, is not safe: Yet, when he has accepted our humiliation, and calls to *stand up* and hear, we must no longer indulge our sorrows, or sense of unworthiness, lest we be swallowed up of over-much grief. Poverty of spirit will degenerate into baseness and abjection of mind, if it rise not up when God commands; and mourning will turn into sullenness or despair, if it refuse to be comforted.—A voluntary humility is as displeasing to God as pride; the excess even of that virtue having no small spice of its contrary extreme.—This our Church also teaches, by calling on us to kneel at our confessions and prayers, and to *stand up*, at the hearing of God's word.

2. *And the spirit entered into me, when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.*

Though Christ (for he it was that spake to the prophet, as appears by the description in the foregoing chapter, ver. 26, 27.) had bidden him to rise, yet here

we find, that this was not in his power to do, until *the spirit had entered into him*. But

^k Luke xiv. 11.

^l Ps. xc. 11.

then,

then, we observe, the spirit entered into him; at the instant the Lord spake: There went a Divine energy along with the words of Christ, which raised our prophet up, and *set him on his feet*.—Thus the word, when preached or heard, profiteth not without the spirit. It is the spirit that quickneth; for he is “the Lord and Giver of life^m,” especially the spiritual and divine. It is he alone that gives that life, which raises us from our earth, which gives us ears to hear, and power to move, and to walk in the ways of God. *He set me on my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.*

In the present case also, with respect to the Ember Season, while our Church is choosing her ministry, and sending labourers into the Lord’s vineyard (as she doth about this time), it is the peculiar office of the Holy Ghost to consecrate and empower men for that holy function.—Christ calls, the Holy Ghost commissions and confers the sacred powersⁿ.—Who then shall presume to intrude into that holy calling, without a legal mission, consecration, and the Divine assistance thereby conferred?

3. *And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a ° rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day.*

As the general apostasy of the Jews, and their consequent captivity by the king of Babylon, was a lively figure of the fall and defection of mankind from God, and our being led captive of the devil at his will; so, in the character of the prophet inviting to repentance, we may observe a type of that Lamb of God, who came to take away the sin of the world, and to redeem us from the bondage and tyranny of Satan. The parallel is very obvious, not only in the substance and tenor of their preaching, which

^m Nicene Creed.
8, 9, 10.

ⁿ See Acts xiii. 2 and 4. 1 Cor. xii. 4,
° Apostatrices. Vulgat.

consisted more particularly in a pressing call to repentance: but, in the appellation of *son of man*, by which each of them is so frequently stiled. This is St. *Jerome's* observation; "The reason, saith he, why God calls this prophet so often *the son of man*, is, because he appointed him to speak to *Israel* in the person of him, who said of himself, *The son of man hath not where to lay his head*; and sent him to comfort that captive people, and call them to repentance."

How discouraging would it be to a natural man, how seemingly vain and ineffectual to the worldly wise, to be sent with a message to such, as he is told beforehand, are too *impudent* and *stiff-hearted* to be moved either by shame or reproof. Yet the prophet is sent on this forlorn embassy, to treat with persons of inveterate and malignant spirits, mere *briers* and *thorns*; where he was to expect no return but hatred for his good-will, and persecution, rather than success. The like prospect our Lord sets before his disciples, when he commissioned them to preach the Gospel,—

"I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves^p." —But how hopeless and discouraging soever such a mission may seem, the servant of God is to have no will or wisdom of his own: Where God's service calls, we must think of no difficulties; when he commands, we are to be all obedience; must dismiss every fear, and every imagination, that stands in opposition to duty, and, as St. *Paul* expresses it, "to yield ourselves to God as instruments^q," prepared and ready to perform his work.—Howbeit, to reconcile us to this doctrine of absolute and unreserved obe-

dience

^p Matt. x. 16.

^q Rom. vi. 13.

dience to the Divine will, when sufficiently made known, we are not to despair of success, where God is pleased to command.—Those wolves, whom the apostles were sent amongst, were turned into lambs by their preaching. Nor may we doubt, but that the labours of this our prophet contributed very much to that reformation which afterwards appeared among the *Jews* upon their return from captivity.—Besides this (as hath been before observed) the infinite rectitude and holiness of God's nature is concerned to do justice to itself: So that, whether men *will bear*, or *whether they will forbear*, it is necessary they should be acquainted with the will of God; and so, at the great day of final retribution, it may appear to all the world, “That he is pure from the blood of all men:”—That he was not wanting to afford to the very worst of men sufficient means of grace, and timely warnings for repentance:—That his justice is impartial, and his mercy free to all that will accept it: not limited by any pre-determined decree of his, but by their own perverse rejection or neglect. So that we may well say, O mercy, how holy and just! O justice, how merciful and gracious! so equally tempered, so lovingly united, that, while they decide the different fates of mankind, the worst of men, in this life, need not despair; nor should the best presume!

6. *And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.*

According to the heathen moralists, fortitude is one of the cardinal or principal virtues, on which the others depend: But, by a much truer philosophy, we are taught, that the right cardinal virtue, on which fortitude itself, and all true courage, is grounded, is the fear of God. For this, of
R 3 course,

246 *The Sixteenth SUNDAY* Ezek. 2.

7. *And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, for they are most rebellious.*

course, excludes all other fears; and, consequently, gives that undauntedness of mind, that firmness of spirit, which neither outward pains [*briers, thorns, and scorpions*] can shake, nor inward grief, from reproachful words, or angry looks, can testify: For, by fixing the passion of fear on one single object, the one thing necessary to be feared, it draws it off from every other idea, which might affrighten or distract.—So our blessed master Christ, “Fear not them which can kill the body, &c. But I will tell you whom you shall fear. Fear him, who can cast both body and soul into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”—This is that single eye, which our Lord recommends^s as the sovereign cure of all worldly care, of every inordinate passion or concern. These it either removes or shortens, sanctifies or destroys, by reducing them to one point. This remedy is not to be found in our own reasonings, or natural courage; not in the writings of *Aristotle* or *Plato*, an *Epictetus* or a *Seneca*; but in the holy Scriptures, the word of GOD;—*My words shalt thou speak unto them.*—Philosophy may argue well, and preach patience and courage to a troubled mind; but the superior excellence of the school of Christ appears in this; that our master, who teaches virtue, can also give it.—His precepts can as soon and as easily remove our cares, as rebuke them; and his word as readily inspire our hearts with courage, as command it.—Thus, in his Gospel, “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” And then it immediately follows, “He rebuked the winds, and there was a great calm.”—A calm at sea, and a calm in his disciples breasts. Thus in our Lesson, *Be not afraid of them.*—His command is both active and authoritative; at once requiring, and be-

^r *Matt. x. 28.*

^s *Ch. vi. 22,*

^t *Matt. viii. 26.*

flowing, the grace we want : So, in his work of creation, " Let there be light, and there was light ^u." — " He spake, and it was done; he commanded, " and it stood fast ^x."

The Fathers have other useful remarks on this passage, relating to our conversation among evil and wicked men; with instructions how we are to behave towards them, and how to bear with patience their manners, &c.—See *Abbé Desacy in locum*.

8. *But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee, Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.*

9. *And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me, and lo, a roll of a book was therein.*

But, as the distemper of our nature is internal, in the heart and inner man, the application must be there also. — The remedy, we have said, is the word of God : This applied outwardly, will have no effect : it must be taken inwardly, received, as it were, at the mouth, eaten and digested, before it can reach and heal the disease.

So in the *Psalms*, " Open thy mouth wide, and I will " fill it ^y."—So in the gospel, " Take, eat :—Drink " ye of all this ^z."—The meat we receive from God's hand, is spiritual meat; the drink we receive, is spiritual drink, whether it be conveyed to us in his word, or his sacrament. So must the appetite be spiritual also; else no effect can follow, but what will rather hurt than benefit the soul.—" The letter " killeth, but the spirit giveth life ^a."

10. *And he spread it before me, and it was written within and without, and there was written therein*

The scriptures (as hath already been observed) carry in them a twofold sense; the one outward and literal, the other inward and spiritual;

^u Gen. i. 3.

^z Matt. xxvi. 26.

^x Ps. xxxiii. 9.

^a 2 Cor. iii. 6.

^y Ps. lxxxi. 10.

lamentations, and mourning, It is written within and without. — Hence a cursory view,

and woe. and first reading, of God's word, to the natural man, is apt to raise melancholy fears, or perhaps a scornful disgust; but to a good man, who enters into the spirit of them, is exceeding pleasant; it is *as honey for sweetness*^b. — What we may further observe, is, that the same hand, which holds forth the roll, must also spread and unfold it to us; namely, the good hand of God; and that is Christ: For he is the hand or arm of God^c, by whom all Divine power and wisdom are performed. He is the power of God, and the wisdom of God^d, — to fortify and instruct his people, as well as the word, by whom the Divine will is revealed. He it is also that, by his spirit, "opens the understanding, that we may understand the Scriptures^e." — Hence also the Fathers admonish us to observe, that the Scriptures are either noxious or salutary, bitter or sweet, according to the disposition and taste of the reader. To the pious man they are food and nourishment; to the sinner they are medical and unsavory; but to the reprobate and impenitent they are death, and contain nothing but destruction and *woe*. To the first they are life and strength; to the second they are medicine and means of health; to the last they are deadly poison. These different effects are owing to the different tempers of men. — And this may intimate to us what care and caution is necessary to prepare ourselves for the worthy reading or hearing of the Holy word, as well as worthy receiving the Holy Supper, lest we read, or hear, as well as eat and drink, damnation to ourselves. That therefore we ought never to touch the Book of God with unwashen, that is to say, with defiled hands, lest we perish for our presumption — God indeed designed his Holy Scriptures for our good

^b Ch. iii. 3.^c *Isa.* liii. 1, &c.^d *1 Cor.* i. 24.^e *Luke* xxiv. 45.

and for our comfort ; and in themselves they are spirit, and they are life ^f : It is our depravity alone that converts them into *lamentations and woe*. Let us therefore often and often pray, when we hear or open that sacred book, as our holy church hath taught us, —
 “ Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scripture
 “ to be written for our learning, grant that we may in
 “ such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly
 “ digest them, that, by patience and comfort of thy
 “ Holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast,
 “ the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast
 “ given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.”

^f *John vi. 63.*





The Sixteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

EZEKIEL, Chap. xiii.

P R E F A C E.

OUR Morning Lesson instructed us in the character and commission of God's true prophets, and the faithful preachers of his word: The next thing necessary, was to apprize us of the marks and danger of impostors and false teachers. And this is the subject and design of our present Lesson. The distinguishing tokens of each, as they are here, by our excellent Church, set in opposition (and, according to her usual way of contrast) the one to the other, are principally these three:

First, True prophets are Called of God, and then duly Ordained to the work of the ministry: But False prophets run without being sent; either they have no lawful ordination, and follow their own spirit; or, if called, and lawfully ordained, they falsify the word, and pretend a message from God, when they have seen nothing.

Secondly, The true prophet consults not his own pleasure or profit, but the will of his master, and the true interest of the people committed to his charge. Whereas False teachers are rather like the foxes in the desert, than shepherds abiding in the field. They seek only their

own advantage; they come not in by the door of the fold, but clandestinely, by some other way; and that (as our Lord speaks of them) "for to steal and to kill^a." They are crafty to deceive, and cunning to destroy: They come only for prey; they care not for the sheep, but for themselves.

Thirdly, The faithful minister makes the word of God his only rule, both of faith and doctrine; he closely adheres to the Scriptures; he exercises himself therein by day, and meditates by night: He reads them within and without, i. e. Studies both the literal and spiritual meaning; feeds on the roll, as held forth to him by the hand of God. First, He converts it into nourishment for his own soul's health and salvation; then, as a tender nurse, administers the sincere milk of the word to his hearers.—Whereas the seducers, and false teachers, either withhold the Scriptures from the people (as our modern Papists do) and substitute lying legends, and inventions of their own, in the room thereof, which, like walls built and daubed with untempered mortar, can yield no security or defence. Or, with some enthusiasts, they pretend to a particular light within, which is no other than a vain vision, a lying divination: Or else, as another sort of them do, set up for extraordinary Scripturists, and say, The Lord saith, the Lord saith, albeit the Lord hath not spoken.—Scripture when applied to deceive, and to establish error, is no Scripture; it changes its nature, ceases to be a divine truth, and becomes a lie:—God's word, in the mouth of a false teacher, is not the word of God.

^a John x. 10.

The Sixteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

EZEKIEL, Chap. xiii.

False prophets and prophetesses described and reprov'd.

1. *AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*

2. *Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD.*

3. *Thus saith the Lord GOD^b, Wo unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing.*

WHO was this word of the LORD which came to the prophet, but the eternal word, the Son of God, the same word, which was in "the beginning," which was with God, and "is God^c": The same word, by whom all things were made that were made; who was also the great angel of the covenant, who conducted and administered all things relating to the Church, under the Old Testament, and was afterwards made flesh, to accomplish and fulfil all things under the New? And that this word, which here is said to come to Ezekiel, and who often, elsewhere, is said to come to the other prophets, was not a mere voice, or sound, such as our words are, but a substantial word, a real person, the very *Logos*, and second person in the most holy and undivided Trinity, appears from *Genesis*, chap. xv. where his coming is first mentioned. 'Tis there said, "He came to Abram in a vision:"—Not to his ears, as a sound only, but to his eyes, as a substance; therefore visible, and a real appearance.

^b See Annotation at the end.^c *John* i. 1.

But

—But of the FATHER our Lord affirms, that, “He hath not appeared to any man at any time^d.”—Therefore we are to believe, that this word, which at any time came, or appeared, was the SON. This is the true faith, by which alone we can be justified, as was *Abraham*; even the faith in *Jesus Christ*.—Increase, O Lord, this faith in us evermore. *Amen*.

4. *O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.*

The fox is a timorous animal, and crafty: It hides itself in holes, and is exceeding cunning, and full of artifice in gaining its prey.

This is the figure, which God gives us, of those false prophets, and evil pastors, which are here spoken of. They have their holes like the *foxes*, because they hate and shun the light of truth, which confounds them: They hide themselves, or, rather seek to hide and disguise their lies, the better to deceive the simple.—They are also hungry and greedy, as the *foxes*, but cover with great art and address their covetous and self-interested designs, under the specious appearance of the good of those they seek to deceive. It is of these *foxes*, who seduce the unwary, and annoy the vineyard of Jesus Christ, that *Solomon* speaks in his Canticle, “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines.” *i. e.* Take them while they are *little*, before they do more mischief, before they grow too strong, or too wily to be taken.

5. *Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.*

The Church is always represented, in Scripture, as an inclosure; either as a city environed with walls; or a vineyard, or field, taken in from the common of the world, and fenced about

^d See *John* vi. 46. and ch. v. 37.

^e Chap. ii. 15.

with

with hedges.—The clergy are the proper officers appointed to secure these sacred inclosures from invasion or surprise; to repair and make up the breaches where any is made, and even to *stand* in the gap, and boldly oppose every enemy that attempts to break in by violence, or intrude by stealth. Or, when divine justice hath been provoked by the sins of the Church, to visit her offences with judgments, and to suffer her hedge to be broken down; even then should the priests, the ministers of the Lord; stand between him and his people, as *Aaron* and *Moses* stood before him in the gap, to turn away his wrathful indignation, lest he should destroy them.—But evil ministers forsake their charge in the day of trial; they fly, when the least danger appears; they withstand not the enemy, by defending those sacred rites, orders, and appointments, which are the security and fence of the Church.—They mind not to repair the breaches, which are made by heresy or infidelity, by schism or neglect.—They are *Gallios* in religion, and care for none of these things; much less do they hazard their lives for the cause of Christ, standing in the gap, to hinder the adversary from breaking in, or to stem the torrent of divine wrath.—It has ever been the distinguishing character of false prophets, to decline all sufferings either *with*, or *for*, the Church: *They make not up the hedge for the house of Israel, nor stand in the battle in the day of the Lord.*

6. *They have seen vanity, and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith; and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.*

7. *Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination,*

It hath been remarked before, that one mark of a false teacher, is want of lawful ordination; running without being sent, having no mission, no authority to preach, &c. Yet these uncommissioned prophets are said to *see*; that is, may indeed have learning, and be able to discourse well: Nay, they

whereas ye say, *The LORD saith it, albeit I have not spoken?*

8. *Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD.*

9. *And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel, and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.*

ble pledges of mercy, have no virtue, or spiritual effect; therefore vain and unprofitable! In whose mouths the very word of God is turned into a *lie*, a *lying divination*.—The judgments therein threatened shall not come to pass, in consequence of the application made by them.—The promises of pardon and peace, shall not be ratified of God, as pronounced by them.—They may *make others to hope that they will confirm the word*; but all in vain. And why? even because *the Lord hath not sent them*.

10. *Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar;*

they may *divine*, that is, read and preach the word of God: Nevertheless, what they have seen, or learned by their study and pains, is a *vain vision*, mere *vanity*: What they read or cite out of the book of God, is a lying divination, mere *lies*: What they preach, is no preaching; for how can they preach, except they be sent?—Let all separatists, as well as their unlicensed teachers, look to this.—

How dreadful a state must it be, to sit under the ministry of such as are no ministers? No ministers of God! In whose hands the Sacraments, though the visi-

There are another sort of false teachers, who are *sent* indeed, and have a lawful mission; but they falsify their message, they corrupt the good word of God, and *seduce his people*.—The people under their care are (per-
haps)

11. *Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower, and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall, and a stormy wind shall rent it.*

12. *Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?*

13. *Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, I will even rent it with a stormy wind in my fury: and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it.*

14. *So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.*

15. *Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it.*

haps) orthodox professors of the true religion, members of Christ's true Church, and the people of God. But the doctrines these teachers deliver, are false and unsound. They either pervert the right use of the keys, and vacate the orders and discipline of the Church, saying *peace, peace, where there is no peace; i. e.* make light of schism and division in the Church, as though it were no sin; and cry, *peace* and unity, where there is no union or agreement in principles or practice. Or else deceive their hearers, by indulging too great a latitude in opinions, or the rules of an holy life; and interpret the great and indispensable duties of religion, in a sense too favourable to the corruptions, and wrong bias, of human nature. — These are like deceitful builders, who build up *walls* with bad and *untempered mortar*, which cannot cement the stones together. Such *mortar* is washed with the first hard *shower*; that is, such loose and unsound doctrines can neither abide any trial of temptation, nor secure its followers from the force of divine

16. To wit, the prophets of Israel, which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord GOD.

17. Likewise thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them.

18. And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Wo to the women that sew pillows to all arm-holes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls: Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you?

19. And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley, and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies?

20. Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls, to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly.

As there were false prophets among the Jews at Babylon; so there were false prophetesses likewise. — These female pretenders took upon them, of their own heads, and merely for filthy lucre, either to resolve cases of conscience, flattering the rich, that brought them presents, in their vices, and speaking to them smooth things, prophesying deceits (as *Isaiab* speaks, ch. xxx. 10.) but treating the more simple, if empty-handed, clients, with rough and terrifying answers; that so, by these artifices, they might make the better hand of all who were so unwise as to come to them for advice. The rich they soothed in their sins, to draw from them the more liberal gifts: The poor they threatened with judgments, to extort money and presents from them. This is called *bunting of souls*, taking some, as it were, with snares, by fair shews of favour and complaisance; and pursuing others with terrors, as it

258 *The Sixteenth* SUNDAY Ezek. 13.

21. *Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.*

22. *Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way by promising him life:*

please all comers. This, by a figurative speech, is called *sewing pillows to all arm-holes*, and *making kerchiefs upon the head of every stature*; i. e. of every sort and condition of people who consulted them. Thus lulling them asleep in a false security, amusing some with golden dreams, and fond expectations of good fortune and blessings from God, where there were no just grounds of hope; and affrighting others, the much honefter persons (if mean and poor) with false predictions of judgment, and evil destiny; and, by such impostures, for the sake of wicked and ungodly gain, *making the heart of the righteous sad, whom God hath not made sad, and strengthening the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wickedness, by promising him life.*

23. *Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations; for I will deliver my people out of your hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.*

were with hounds, to make a prey of them, by force and violence. Thus, for the poor profit of *handfuls of barley, and pieces of bread*, slaying the souls that should not die, and saving the souls alive that should not live, by lying to God's people who heard (i. e. who gave ear to) their lyes.—Or else, these false propheteesses, like some of our moderns, pretended to tell fortunes; and, the better to serve their interest, had answers ready to

The great end of Christ's coming into the world, was to destroy the works of the devil; one of which, and the very greatest, was sorcery, and the arts of magic, which our Lesson calls *divining*

divining

vining divinations. A remarkable instance of this prevailing power of the Gospel appeared in those *Ephesian* converts, who, embracing the faith of Christ, on the preaching of St. Paul, "brought all their " books of magic together, and burned them before " all men."—The story also related by *Plutarch*, in his treatise concerning the silence of oracles, that a voice was heard, declaring, "The good *Pan* was " dead" (*i. e.* silenced) was a proof hereof, and a literal verification of this prophecy.—Another end of his coming was, to build a Church upon earth, which should be the ground and pillar of truth, and to establish therein a perpetual priesthood, and constant succession of faithful men, whose lips should preserve knowledge. So that his people (*i. e.* all true Christians) should *no more see vanity*, nor have recourse to such *divinations*, and pretended oracles, wherewith Satan had so long bewitched the world; but should be delivered out of the hands of all seducers, and *know*, that Christ, who here speaks by the prophet, is the Lord *Jehovah*, the very and eternal God.

* *Acts xvii.*

Ver. 3. *The Lord God.*] The *Hebrew* reading is *Adonai Jehovih*, which our translators here, and where-ever else it occurs, (as it very often doth, in *Ezek.* and the other prophets) render, the LORD GOD; but I humbly conceive not so properly, nor indeed strictly and literally. In strictness it should rather be translated *My Lord*, *my Jehovah*; and so corresponds exactly with that title, which St. Thomas gave to Jesus Christ, when convinced of his resurrection and divinity (*John xx. 28*) MY LORD, and MY GOD.—But this is submitted to the consideration of the candid and more competent reader, who shall be disposed to observe, and meditate on, the several names and titles by which the Holy Ghost (especially in the *Hebrew* of the Old Testament) hath been pleased to stile the Divine Being. The use of this, I humbly conceive to be of singular benefit, and most worthy of our knowledge and information, as one of the best means for confirming our faith, and improving our apprehensions of the being, nature, and attributes of God.



The Seventeenth Sunday after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

EZEKIEL, Chap. xiv.

P R E F A C E.

IN this Lesson there are two things principally to be remarked:

First, That nothing is more detested of God than hypocrisy.

Secondly, That nothing is a more certain omen, or forerunner of ruin to a nation, than epidemical sin.

Under the character of the Elders coming to the prophet, and sitting before him, to be instructed in the knowledge of the true God, but having their idols in their heart, is represented the heinous impiety, as well as baseness of hypocrisy. It not only loves the praise of men, more than the praise of God, but is a virtual idolatry, and, in effect, casts out the Holy Spirit out of his temple, and sets up in his room, the idols of pride and vanity, the flesh and the world.

The notorious proneness of the Jews to the worship of idols, was the cause of their present punishment and captivity: But this captivity, in the event, proved the cure of their superstition. After this we never find them addicted to the grosser acts of idolatry.

The Elders therefore, who now came to the prophet, were probably such as had renounced the formal service of the idols, and professed a thorough conversion to the worship and obedience of the true God.

But God, who looks to the heart, rejected these mens addresses as insincere, because they had not cleansed their hearts, as well as hands, of all their idols; that is, either they had still too great an inclination to the superstitious ceremonies of the heathen deities, which they pretended to have renounced, retaining the love of their former corruptions, although they forbore the commission; and consequently had only a shew of godliness, but not the power thereof:

Or else, notwithstanding they had forsaken both the practice and love of those absurd superstitions, which they and their forefathers had so severely smarted for; yet still a root of bitterness remained unmortified in their hearts: Some other darling lust, some other idol possessed their affections; so that there wanted still a further purgation and reſorm, to render their repentance complete and acceptable.

As to the second part of the Lesson, which teaches us the danger of epidemical and national sins; it is sufficient only to mention it here, and to refer to the reflections which may arise upon reading and meditating on that part of the chapter. Only it may be of use to observe here, That, of all the various reasons which interpreters assign, why Noah, Daniel, and Job, are here particularly named, rather than Abraham, or other saints of the Old Testament, the most conclusive, as well as most comfortable, seems to be this, That, although such good men as these may not be able to avert the punishment of a land, when it hath filled up the measure of its sins, and is ripe for judgment; yea, although they themselves may be involved in the common calamity (as those three righteous men were, one in the destruction of the whole old world, the other in that of his country, the latter in that of his family); yet, that such men are not only preserved from perishing in the public ruin, but often live to become, like them, the happy

instruments, in the hands of a merciful God, to retrieve a wicked world, their sinking country, or afflicted friends, from utter destruction; or, at least, to mitigate the wrath of divine justice, which they could not wholly prevent: And, at length, to restore that peace and tranquillity, by their sufferings, patience, and prayers, which neither their instructions, nor examples, had efficacy enough to preserve.

The Seventeenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

EZEKIEL, Chap. xiv.

Hypocrisy odious to God: Public vices the cause of public judgments.

1. **T**HEN came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.

2. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

3. Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?

4. Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Every man of the house of Israel, that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his

HYPocrisy is the reverse to the truth; a compound of falshood and pride; and so not only contrary to the very nature of God, who is truth itself, but an impious insult upon his wisdom. Man it may deceive by its pretended sanctity, and fair outside; but God will not be so mocked; he sees the inmost recesses of the soul: The hidden man of the heart is naked and open before him, with all those sinful affections and lusts, which are there set up, as so many idols, in opposition to, or competition with, him.—Now, if such men come to inquire of God,

iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols,

5. *That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.*

truth, that is counter to their darling passion.—Consequently God seems to have no way to deal with such people, but by a declared opposition to them, and answering and avenging their concealed contempt of his majesty, by an open and avowed resistance; for “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace only “to the lowly.”

6. *Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, Repent and turn yourselves from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations.*

7. *For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself.*

8. *And I will set my face against that man, and will*

God, to consult his will by his word, or his ministers, it is no more possible for them to profit by the answer, than it is for a man to walk or see two ways at once: Those objects of love, which rival God in their hearts, are like so many *stumbling-blocks* before their faces, and cause them to stumble at every

There is no serving two masters of quite different interests and pursuits: “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” To follow the one is to be *estranged* from, and renounce the other. He therefore, that would repent, must necessarily change his course, and quite turn back again from the broad way, before he can enter into the way of life: He must cast out the *idols* (of vanity, pleasure, &c.) out of his heart, before he can be reconciled to God. For this is a rule in religion which admits of no exception;—Repentance is no repentance without a total change, a thorough renovation

make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

novation and real *turn* of mind.—But, on these terms, a pardon is open to the greatest offender.—God is too good and gracious to strike without warning, without a

call, without an invitation, to repentance; and yet too just and holy to accept a partial conversion, a piece of the heart: He will have the whole, or none.—Happy and wise is that man, who can say with the Psalmist, “If I incline unto wickedness with mine heart, the Lord will not hear me. But God hath heard me, and considered the voice of my prayer. Praised be God, who hath not cast out my prayer, nor turned his mercy from me^a.”

9. *And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.*

10. *And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him:*

And yet, O God of mercy, God of truth! who art righteous in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works, can it be true, that thou *deceivest* any? Can it be just, that thou punishest any that is so *deceived*?—Were it not thine own saying of thyself, who would presume to affirm it? Who, without impiety, would believe it?—But, as nothing can be true of thee, that is not consistent with thy holiness; nor any one attribute interfere and clash with

another, let thy word be its own interpreter. The sense of this passage therefore, which seems so harsh, and difficult to conceive, will be best expounded by a parallel place in the history of *Abab*, and his false prophets, as represented by the true prophet *Micaiah*, 1 Kings xxii. 20, &c. By which it appears, that

^a *Psalms* lxvi.

God is not the author or abettor of deceit, but the judge and avenger of it: Acting in his judicial capacity, he punishes deceit with deceit, the sin of one man with the like sin in another.

This was the very case of those false prophets, whom God is here pronouncing sentence against, and of the people who consulted them. By a mutual deception the prophet and people seduced each other; "Deceiving, and being deceived^b." And this heavy sentence (than which nothing in this life can be more terrible) is confirmed by the Gospel-law, in those words of the Apostle, concerning the grand impostor, that wicked one who was to be revealed, *2 Thess. ii.* "Whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lye, that all might be damned, who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." And our Lord himself declares, That "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch^c."—How just then is this doom on all, who prefer falshood to truth!—And yet, how common is this case, and this judgment, in these our own days!

II. *That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions: but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord GOD.*

It hath been already observed, on *Jer. xxxv. ver. 1.* that temptation (or trials) may arise either from a good or evil agent; that it is in itself indifferent, and only to be distinguished by the moral end or design of it. Here (in our Lesson) we may see, That the design of God in deceiving, or rather suffering his people and their pro-

^b *2 Tim. ii. 13.*

^c *Matt. xv. 14.*

266 *The Seventeenth SUNDAY* Ezek. 14.

phets to deceive each other, was not for their destruction, but amendment; even that they might, by their own experience, be convinced of their folly and errors, and so *go no more astray from him, &c.*—Good is his constant and unalterable view in all he does; and mercy his only end, in all his temporal judgments. He punishes here, that he may reform; and “scourgeth every son whom he receiveth^d,” dealing with us in this world as a Father, rather than a Judge; as a Physician to heal our backslidings, rather than as an Enemy, to cut off and destroy.—And, if the gracious design of his chastisement succeed, what greater blessing can there be, than to be made thereby the *people of God*? What greater happiness, than to have the *LORD* for our God?

12. *The word of the LORD came again to me, saying,*

13. *Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it.*

14. *Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.*

15. *If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no*

St. John tells us (1 John v. 16.) “There is a sin, “which a man may commit,” that is “not unto death,” and for such an one we “may pray;” that there is also a sin unto death, he will not say, we may pray for such as are guilty of it. We also find the prophet *Jeremy* is forbidden to pray for the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*; for that God would not hear him.—Of course then, there is a time when intercession will prevail, and a time when it shall not, though offered up by men as righteous as *Noah*, as beloved as *Daniel*,

^d Heb. xii. 6,

man may pass through because of the beasts :

16. Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate.

17. Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it :

18. Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves.

19. Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast :

20. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

21. For thus saith the Lord GOD, How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast,

as upright as Job. — There is a time of mercy, and a time of punishment, a day of grace, and a day of visitation and judgment (see Luke xix. 42, &c.)—When a nation is generally corrupted, and wickedness grown fashionable, epidemical, and universal, “ ’Tis time for thee, Lord, to lay to thine hand, for they have destroyed thy law.”—The truth is, judgment in such a case, is the greatest mercy; and a longer forbearance would be the greatest judgment. To spare the rod, at such a time, would be to give all over to reprobation, and utter destruction. Wherefore God, who is still influenced by goodness in the severest dispensations, corrects all, that he may save some: Like a wise physician, when the wound is grown incurable, he uses amputation; that so what is sound may not also perish.

All judgments are from God; but these four are more especially called his, because they are the more apparent strokes of his justice, and the certain marks of his anger. In

268 *The* Seventeenth SUNDAY Ezek. 14.

and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast? In two of them, he uses the

rage of creatures, as instru-

ments and executioners of

his wrath: The other two, *famine* and *pestilence*, are immediately from himself. But all of them are *fore* judgments, being the severest which can befall men in this world. They are also the usual punishments, which are inflicted upon nations and communities of men, when they have *transgressed grievously*, and filled up the measure of their sins.—In the preceding verses, God speaks of sending but One of these heavy scourges at a time, on Other nations; but on *Jerusalem*, on his own people, he sends them *all*; all his *four fore judgments* at once.—To teach us, That those, who have once been enlightened, and received the knowledge of the truth, if they fall away, and rebel against him, they must expect much heavier punishment than aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of *Israel*.—Thus, also, our Lord assures us, “That it shall be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for *Tyre* and *Sidon*, *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, than for those who have heard his word, and rejected it.”

All these four fore judgments were literally executed on *Jerusalem*: The *sword* of the *Chaldeans*; *famine* in the siege; the *noisome beast* devouring such as fled to the deserts and fields for shelter from the sword or famine; and the *pestilence*, bringing up the rear, as the general consequence of the rest, and the final stroke of Divine Vengeance.—But, are we of this nation, who equal, if not surpass, those *Jews* in their wickedness, exempt from their plagues? From those corporal punishments, we are indeed hitherto free; at least have felt but some of them*, and that in the gentlest manner. But from the plague, which corresponds to them in the spiritual sense, we are not free. These have taken hold of us long since, although we

* Dearth 1740. War abroad. Rebellion at home, 1745.

stupidly

stupidly perceive it not. Our spiritual life is slain, and generally extinguished, by the *sword* of Divine Wrath; the spirit of grace, which is the life of the soul, is departed from us; we are dead in trespasses and sin.—We also suffer a grievous *famine*,—not of bread, but of the Word of God; and that a voluntary one, by a notorious neglect and contempt of the Holy Scriptures; too great a scarcity of vigilant pastors, faithful dispensers of the word, and obedient hearers.—And while the *noisome beasts* of heresy, schism, and infidelity, slay those unhappy souls, who wander into the wilds of erroneous opinions, and separate themselves from the unity and communion of the Church, how has the *pestilence* of corrupt and pernicious examples spread an universal contagion amongst those who take delight in company and conversation!—The plague is gone out amongst us; the whole body is infected, and infecting one another.—Thus, in spirituals, have these *four sore judgments*, too truly, taken hold of us; yet no man layeth it to heart. And how soon some, or all of them, may, corporally, and in full measure, be inflicted on this sinful nation, we have, indeed, no prophecy to foretel, but too just reason to expect: I had almost said, to desire and wish for, that so, by the smart of God's outward rod, we may be awakened from our spiritual lethargy, into a lively sense of our sin and misery; into a timely repentance and amendment, lest our present spiritual death consign us over to that which is eternal.

22. Yet behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way, and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought up-

But if God's severity towards his own people be greater than to others, so are his mercies. Yea, his judgments are therefore the greater, that they may make way for his mercy: That so a remnant may always be left.—His Church shall be corrected, but not given up to destruction;

276 *The Seventeenth SUNDAY* Ezek. 14.

on Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it.

23. *And they shall comfort you when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause, all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD.*

destruction;—a remnant shall still be brought forth out of the fiery trial, purified, and refined, by their afflictions.—And, as this best effect of sufferings is beneficial to the Church, so will it tend greatly to the honour of God, whose wisdom and righteousness will be justified by the destruction of the wicked;

and his goodness displayed, by sparing the just, and brightening their virtues. He corrects all, that he may save some.—And if, in this procedure, God is merciful as well as just; how condescending is he also in giving his sinful creatures, even while they lie under the rod of correction, the reason of his conduct, and seeming severity.—*Ye shall see their way, to wit, the happy reformation of your posterity; and be comforted concerning the evil,*—which produced so blessed an effect. *And ye shall know, that I have not done without cause all that I have done.*—Ye shall then know, that it was love, not hatred, or an arbitrary, irrespective decree, or mere act of predestination, which induced me to chastise you.—Now, this was immediately spoken to the captives at *Babylon*, as an encouragement to them under the heavy pressure of their captivity, and the approaching desolation of their country. But did they survive to see the happy effects here foretold; namely, That their posterity should be brought forth from *Babylon*, and be restored to their own land, and prove a pious and virtuous people:—That they themselves should see their ways and their doings, and receive a comfort from so pleasing a sight?—This could hardly, so much as in part, happen to them in this life; the captivity itself lasting above seventy years; so beyond the usual term of human life. And therefore may we not (and I hope without any force upon the truth) rather take this prophecy

phesy as extending beyond the grave, even to the invisible state; so as to gather from hence (what is likewise favoured by other scriptures), that souls, departed from the body, are not insensible of what passes in this world after their decease: That the spirits of good men have an interest in the spiritual concerns of their surviving friends and relations,—*their sons and their daughters*: That they receive an additional happiness in observing their conversion, or progress in virtue; and even a *comfort* for the sorrows and afflictions, which they themselves had endured in the world; when they shall perceive and *know*, that those very sufferings have contributed to so good an end, and proved the happy means of their friends or childrens reformation.

The eleventh verse contains a plain intimation of the Blessed Trinity, as the object of our faith. He that speaks is the Son of God, as appears by his peculiar character, so often used in this prophet, of *Adhonai Jehowih*. And the verb [*Ehieh*, I will be] being the same, whereby the same Sacred Person describes his name in *Exod. iii.* but there rendered, by our translation, *I am*, is also a confirmation, that it is *Christ* who speaks here (as we observed before, on chap. xiii). He, as the *word*, and messenger of the covenant, promises, that, to the posterity of these *Jews*, God would be (that is, should be revealed to be) *Labem*, *Leelohim* (not, *their God*, as we render it, but more expressively) should be *to them*, for *Elohim*; i. e. should be revealed to them in his plural character, as a TRINITY, as Three Persons and One God. See a further note on the name *Adhonai Jehowih*, on chap. xiii. and chap. xxiv. ver. 21, 24.





The Seventeenth Sunday after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

EZEKIEL Chap. xviii.

P R E F A C E.

IN this Lesson is stated the case of penitent and impenitent sinners, with the true grounds and motives, upon which God acquitteth the one, and condemneth the other: And five cases are specially put.

First, The case of a just man; one who is righteous in all points, who has preserved his integrity to the utmost of his power, and constantly led a moral and religious life. Such person (without respect to any worldly relations of father or son, &c. and with gracious allowances for the infirmities of our present frail nature) shall have a favourable sentence pronounced, when he comes to appear before the just tribunal of God; and will be adjudged to live.

Secondly, The case of the son of a righteous father degenerating into wickedness, and dying in his sin; such a one shall have no favour or benefit from the piety of his parents or ancestors; but for his own iniquities, and the sins he hath committed, will be condemned to die.

Thirdly, The case of a righteous son of a wicked father. If he practise and persevere in virtue, and the duties

duties of religion; such a one shall not suffer for the iniquity of his parents: He shall surely live.

Fourthly, of a person, who hath been a great, even the greatest of sinners, but repents of his wickedness, and leads the remainder of his life in a strict observance of God's laws, doing that which is lawful and right; such a man shall receive a full and absolute pardon:—He shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: In his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live.

The last case, is that of a righteous man turning from his righteousness, and relapsing in sin: His former piety and good works shall stand him in no stead; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

All this is just, and right, and holy. But is not this proceeding (might a carnal Jew, or any worldly man, say) contrary to the very words of the law (Commandment the second), where it is expressly declared, "I will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, &c." And are not we [Jews] punished for the sins of our fathers? Are not those sins now visited upon us in this captivity? in this or that judgment?—And is not this very cause assigned of God himself in sundry places of his word; particularly, Jer. xvi. 10, 11 "Because your fathers have forsaken me, &c.—Therefore will I cast you out of this land," &c.—For this reason there seemed to be good grounds for that proverb which had obtained among the Jews in Babylon, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and their childrens teeth are set on edge."

To obviate this objection, which carries in it so flagrant, so severe a reflection on the justice and goodness of God, his answer in the above-cited passage of Jerem'y (where the Jews are represented enquiring, "Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity? &c." might have sufficed, had it been taken entire, and fairly attended to; the reason there given, of God's anger against them, being not only the

sins of their fathers, who had forsaken him, but that they [their children] had done worse than their fathers (ver. 11.) This, I say, had been a sufficient vindication of the equity of the Divine law, and the justice of God's dealings with that people. But they, and so all of us, are ever too partial in our own judgment concerning God and ourselves. —We see not all his goodness; we see not all our own faults. We know not him, nor ourselves, enough, and that, because we take his word but by halves; and are often wholly blind, or too favourable, to our own demerits. Hence it is, that, instead of due submission to his corrections, instead of bearing the rod, and him that sent it, we are putting our saucy questions, as those Jews did, "Wherefore hath the Lord done this? and what is our iniquity?" —The effectual and only cure for such refractory and mistaken notions concerning God and ourselves, is to study his word, and our own lives and actions, with more impartiality and attention. —And to induce us to do this, is the main drift and design of this Lesson.

We are here taught, That all the souls of men, whether fathers or sons, are from God; that they are his, and his only; consequently, not [ex traduce^a, or] derived from the parents, as the bodies of their children are; and therefore, having no essential relation to each other, but what is common to all souls, as they are the creatures of God, and of the same species, cannot be answerable for the actions of others, but only for their own.

To illustrate and enforce this principle, the five above cases are stated, wherein the method of Divine justice is amply set forth, and irrefragably vindicated: The bare relation which God is pleased to give of his proceedings, in rewarding or punishing the souls of men, being a clear and sufficient justification of the equity and rectitude of them.

The objection then, as to the seeming contradiction between this and the second commandment, is solved by ob-

^a See Sir John Davies's poem on the immortality of the soul.

servings the difference of the case there and here. In that law, the case relates to the methods of God's justice in this present world, where it is not only common, but, for many reasons, very just, that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. But in the next world, at the day of his general judgment, and final retribution (which is plainly the case in our Lesson), it is not so, nor just that it should be so.—Every soul, at that time, when stripped of all temporal relations, shall receive a sentence according to their own works and behaviour in this life, without any regard to the merits or demerits of others, how nearly soever related to them here^b.

The objection, which may be started here, concerning original sin, and the propagation of it from Adam to his posterity, and so consequently from father to son, must be allowed to carry much greater difficulty.—Many and endless are the disputes on this subject, and various the arguments for reconciling this effect of our fall to the equity and justice of Divine goodness. But they being too prolix, and perhaps too abstruse, to be discussed in this place, let us, at least for the present, resolve with St. Augustine, rather to exercise our humility in acknowledging our ignorance, than our speculations and curiosity, in solving or controverting this mysterious point.

“ This sin of the first man (saith that saint) is ineffable and incomprehensible, as well in itself, as in its consequences. 'Tis for us therefore to revere, in the verity and justice of God, what is not in our power to comprehend. And it is but just, that man, having presumed, contrary to his order, to affect the knowledge of good and evil, by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, which had been forbidden him, should not be able to understand this profound mystery of iniquity, in which we are involved by our birth, and from whence we cannot possibly be delivered, but thro' faith in Christ, and the grace of regeneration, or the new birth in baptism.”

^b See Matt. xxii. 30.

The Seventeenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

EZEKIEL, Chap. xviii.

The standing rule of Divine justice; or the terms on which alone is to be obtained the remission of sins.

1. **T**HE word of the
LORD came unto
me again, saying,

2. *What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten four grapes, and the childrens teeth are set on edge?*

3. *As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.*

4. *Behold, all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth it shall die.*

THE saying here censured, and which the captive Jews in Babylon are forbidden to use any more, seems to have been a profane reflection on that clause in the second commandment, where the sins of the fathers are threatned to be visited on the children, &c. as if that law were unreasonable, and the execution unjust. They owned their forefathers had indeed been grievous sinners, and had offended against that law in particular, yet died (many of them) in peace: But that they, their poor descendants, and

more innocent posterity (as they thought themselves), were punished for their fathers sins.—*The fathers had eaten the four grapes, and their childrens teeth were set on edge.*—Thus it was then, and thus it is still, very usual for hardened and impenitent sinners, to throw the blame of their sufferings on others, nay, on God himself, rather than see and confess their own faults.—To correct this dangerous mistake (which yet was grown so common as to become proverbial), and, at the same time, to convince them of their unreasonable partiality towards themselves, as well as to vindicate his own justice, and the honour of his law,
God

God is pleased to use several arguments to evince the invariable equity of his proceedings towards mankind. The first is taken from the nature of souls in general, that *all souls* are *his* (ver. 4).—2dly, From the reason of the thing, and the essential equity of Divine justice, as is particularly set forth in five several cases.—And, 3dly, From his own nature, his philanthropy and love of mankind, as well as his inerrable justice and equity. That therefore *his ways* could not but be *equal*, as well as full of mercy and compassion, as appears by that tender expostulation (ver. 31, 32.) *Why will ye die, O house of Israel? for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God.*

5. *But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right,*

Justice and righteousness, in common acceptation, are synonymous terms, and both in sacred and profane authors signify the very same

thing, to wit, the whole duty of man, towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves; even the whole substance of religion and morality. But here God himself is pleased to give us, in this verse, the true definition of justice or righteousness, that it consists of two parts; namely, to *do*, 1st, That which is *lawful*; and, 2dly, That which is *right*; or, as it is expressed in the *Hebrew*, to do judgment and justice; that is, to conform our actions to the Divine law; and also to do them in a just or right manner. The first is properly obedience, and is sufficient to satisfy all human and outward laws, so as to make the action itself *just*; but it is not sufficient to denominate a man just in the sight of God, who pondereth the heart. The Divine law extends to the internal principle of our actions, and requires not only that the work or action itself, or that which the law commands, should be performed; but that it shall be *rightly* performed [*bonum bene*]: The first without the latter, is but [*opus operatum*] the mere work. But,

278 *The Seventeenth SUNDAY* Ezek. 18.

in conjunction with the latter, it becomes an acceptable work, and so fulfils the whole law of God.— And in proportion as the manner of performing it is more or less *right*, the obedience is more or less perfect, and consequently intitled to greater or lesser degrees of reward. So that we may not only, with the apostle, distinguish between things lawful, and things expedient, or consider these two branches of justice as respecting the positive and the moral law of God; but as they respect the law of works, and the law of the Gospel, as the same apostle distinguishes; or, as he elsewhere speaks, the works of the law, and the works of faith,—the letter and the spirit; the first of which killeth, the other maketh alive. The first, as they are our own works, and may be performed by mere natural strength, are dead works; the other, as wrought in God thro' Christ, are pleasing to him, because they are both *lawful* and *right*. But, to use the apostle's words and sentiment, "I shew you a more excellent way." Altho' faith quickens and justifies the work, it is love only that constitutes the right manner of our obedience, and so is the "fulfilling of the whole law."

6. And *bath not eaten upon the mountains, neither bath lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither bath defiled his neighbours wife, neither bath come near to a menstruous woman.*

7. And *bath not oppressed any, but bath restored to the debtor his pledge, bath spoiled none by violence, bath given his bread to the*

The particular points of righteousness, which form the just man's character, are here enumerated; to shew us, that is is not enough for a man to eschew *some*, but *all*, sins; or to do some good things, but *all*; and to be uniform in his obedience.—Whosoever comes short of this, thro' any wilful defect, is not reputed righteous or *just* before God. The particulars here men-

hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment.

8. *He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,*

9. *Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.*

tioned, contain the substance of both tables of the law, or, according to St. Paul's brief compendium, constitutes the whole of religion in the threefold duty of "living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," *Titus* ii. 12. As to idolatry, 'tis plain we are not only to forbear all bowing down to, or worshipping of, idols; but even *lifting up our eyes* to them; that is, looking upon them as instruments, or helps, in religious worship.—Let Papists consider this, who recommend the use of images, as books of devotion to assist the unlearned. The truly pious man, who is *just* to God, and to his own soul, is not so much as to *lift up his eyes* to them. Whoso makes use of them as means of grace, is injurious to the blessed SPIRIT of God, whose sole property and office it is to appoint and bless the means whereby he conveys his grace. But he that trusts to those means which are expressly forbidden of God, not only deceives his own soul, but brings a curse upon it, instead of a blessing.

Ver. 7. *Hath given his bread to the hungry.*] Upon this St. Jerome well observes, "That, in giving alms, two qualifications are here required; that what we give be of our own substance, our own *bread*, i. e. what we have acquired by just and honest means." 2dly, "That it be to the *hungry*,—persons that are real and proper objects of our charity."

Ver. 8. *Hath not given upon usury, neither hath taken any increase.*] Some casuists have resolved all Interest or profit for the use of money to be absolutely unlawful. But the law of God doth not prohibit it as [*malum in se*] a sin in itself, and against the rule of

justice, except when it interferes with charity, and in such cases where it would be oppressive and ungenerous. For so the law of God runs (*Exod. xxii. 25.*), “If thou lend money to any of *my people* that is *poor* by thee, thou shalt not be to *him* as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon *him* usury.” Here the usury forbidden is plainly limited to one of GOD’s people, and him *poor*; yea, poor *by thee*, i. e. thy near neighbour and acquaintance. Usury, or interest for money lent to such an one, would be inhuman, as well as uncharitable: For here mercy ought to be shewn; and not only the interest, but the very principal too, be forgiven, if such poor friend or neighbour be not in a condition to repay. This more especially ought to be the practice among Christians, whom the Gospel law enjoins, “to do good, and to lend (to such persons), hoping for nothing again^d.” Whence it is evident, that in certain cases (namely, such as are not excepted by God’s law) interest for money is lawful. Otherwise not only all trade and commerce must cease, but no person whatsoever ought to receive any rent or profit for the lands he lets, or the goods he sells, to others; which rent, or profit made, is no other than interest for the money laid out in the purchase of such lands or effects. Yea, such a doctrine as absolutely condemns all *increase* as unlawful, impeaches the equity of God’s general proceedings with mankind, who expects and requires an improvement of the benefits he bestows, as plainly appears by our Lord’s parable of the talents, which were committed on special trust, not only to be occupied by the receivers, but that an interest, as well as the principal, should be accounted for, and the lender, under which character God himself is represented, might, as our Lord expresses it, “Receive his own with usury.” There is indeed a common distinction made between interest and usury: The

^d *Luke vi. 35.*

first is regulated and ascertained by the law of the land, and from hence called lawful; the other is commonly understood to be a going beyond the legal proportion of increase, and extorting a premium for money lent above the common and allowed interest. This is generally called usury, and is not defensible.

Ver. 9. *Hath walked in my statutes, &c.*] Here note, God saith, My statutes, and My judgments, as it were by way of contradistinction to the ordinances of men, mere human laws, and worldly ways, or inventions. Hence we learn, that if this conformity of our lives to the statutes and judgments, that is, to the whole will of God, be necessary to form the character of the *just* man, who is to be saved, it follows, of course, that the *statutes*, or revealed will of God, ought to be carefully read and studied; and his *judgments* (by which may be here meant the general acts of his providence, or the awards of his justice), be so attended to, and observed, as on every occasion to influence us *to deal truly*.—Without the Scriptures, we could not certainly know the will of God:—Without regarding his judgments, we should not be induced to obey it.—None then can be truly *just*, that takes not the truth of God to guide, and his justice to awe, him into the paths of duty and obedience.

We have here a second case stated; that of a *son* degenerating from his father:—And one general observation arises from the whole, which illustrates the superior excellence of that religion, which God in his word hath revealed to mankind, above all other religions whatsoever; namely, that it is calculated, as well as designed,

10. *If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doth the like to any one of these things.*

11. *And that doth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbours wife.*

12. *Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled*

by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lift up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination.

13. *Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations, he shall surely die, his blood shall be upon him.*

to root out, or redress, all those disorders in the world, which disturb the peace, and obstruct the happiness, of mankind in general. Whereas idolatry, and all false religion, not only tolerates and allows of, but even leads to, and produces, all those acts of violence, injustice, and oppression, which are the natural causes of all mi-

sery and unhappiness.—We here see, that the man, who *lifts up his eyes to the idols*, is, at the same time, a robber, a shedder of blood, defiler of his neighbour's wife, an oppressor, an usurer, &c. And the history of antient and modern idolatry proves this truth, that the most flagrant crimes of cruelty, uncleanness, &c. are so far from being inconsistent therewith, that they generally flow from it.—The very mysteries of the heathen worship consisted in impurity and bloodshed, or encouraged them. Nor will the *Popish* synagogue come short of Paganism herein, if we take a view of the bloody effects of their blind zeal against Protestants, or the obscene consequences of their doctrine of celibacy, and venial sin.—Modern *Rome*, as she agrees with heathen *Rome*, in lifting up her eyes to *idols*, may vie with her also in her other abominations; the same cause producing still the same effect. Nevertheless, Protestants may not think themselves wholly free from the like charge: Spiritual idolatry is no less productive of the crimes here condemned, nor less contrary to the peace and happiness of mankind. Nothing can so effectually promote our real good, and true interest, both here and hereafter, as the true worship of the true God. Did all universally turn themselves from *their idols*, and serve him in spirit and in truth, we should soon see a heaven upon earth, and all those glorious prophecies, which

which are the natural effects of the Gospel, would immediately take place.—“The wolf would dwell
“with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the
“kid; the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling,
“together, and a little child should lead them.”—
Wherever Christianity prevails, so far as totally to
abolish every kind of idolatry, there the *millennium* is
already begun; for there Christ reigns with his saints
upon earth.

14. Now lo, if he beget
a son that seeth all his fa-
thers sins which he hath done,
and considereth, and doth not
such like,

15. That hath not eaten
upon the mountains, neither
hath lift up his eyes to the
idols of the house of Israel,
hath not defiled his neigh-
bours wife,

16. Neither hath oppressed
any, hath not with-holden
the pledge, neither hath spoil-
ed by violence, but hath
given his bread to the hungry,
and hath covered the naked
with a garment.

17. That hath taken
off his band from the poor,
that hath not received usury
nor increase, hath executed
my judgments, hath walked
in my statutes; he shall not
die for the iniquity of his
father, he shall surely live.

18. As for his father,
because he cruelly oppressed,
spoiled his brother by violence,

Next follows the case of
a good son of a wicked fa-
ther:—He, forsaking his
father's crimes, shall also
escape his punishment. What
forms his character, is es-
chewing evil, and doing
good; for so the one is here
set against the other;—*Hath*
not eaten, &c. Hath not lift
up his eyes, &c. Hath not op-
pressed, &c.—But *hath given*
his bread to the hungry, &c.
So that the good man not
only abstains from sin, but
performs the contrary du-
ties; and this is called *walk-*
ing in the statutes of God;
his commandments being the
path to eternal life; and he
that *walks* in this way, not
only doth that which is law-
ful and right, but, of course,
eschews what is contrary
thereto.—Such an one per-
forms the whole covenant of
grace, which was ever the
same:—He not only re-
pents of his sins, but keeps
all God's holy will and
com-

284 *The Seventeenth SUNDAY* Ezek. 18.

and did that which is not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity. commandments, and walks in the same all the days of his life.

19. Yet say ye, *Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father?—*

As if they should say, Why? Is it not so threatened in the second commandment? and is it not so come

to pass with respect to the present generation, who now suffer for the iniquity of their fathers?—To this God makes answer,

—When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live.

20. *The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*

21. *But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.*

This contains the fourth case; to wit, the case of a sincere penitent, who is converted from a state of sin.—

And we here see what a true repentance consists in; 1st, A turning from all the sins we have committed; that is, not only ceasing from the act, but the love of sin, and from all evil habits, which have been contracted by a vicious practice: 2dly, The keeping all the statutes of God, &c. that is, in applying the whole bent of our future course of life to the acts of duty and obedience.—The first

22. *All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live.*

23. *Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?*

first part of conversion without this, is but a partial and imperfect repentance; the latter part without the former, is a vain and impracticable attempt.—He therefore that would *live*, and *not die*, must *first* eschew evil, and *then* do good.—Such a man's repentance shall not only put away the guilt, but the very remembrance, of his sins; they shall not, at the day of judgment, be so much as *mentioned*.—His pardon shall be both free and full, a complete act of grace and indemnity.—A comfort this to such penitents (and some such I have met with), who, having committed certain scandalous and shameful sins, have, tho' truly penitent, been under the apprehension of having those secret and shocking crimes laid open and published before men and angels at the last day. But this, we are assured, will not be, if those crimes be forsaken, and repented of.—An act of oblivion is here promised, which shall bury them in eternal silence; or, as God elsewhere declares, *I will blot out thy sins as a thick cloud*.—No trace or sign of them shall remain, when mercy has once dispersed the dark cloud of guilt, which interposed between God and the soul.—And further to assure us of this plenary indulgence and forgiveness, God asserts the infinite benignity of his nature, as an evident proof to every true penitent, that it cannot be otherwise, in this strong and pathetic question,—*Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD, and not that he should return from his ways, and live?* Consequently, the true penitent hath no reproach, much less a purgatory, to fear after death.

This is the fifth, and one of the most alarming cases in the whole Scriptures:—
 24. *But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that* A righteous man turning from his righteousness, and revolting from God! And

286 *The Seventeenth SUNDAY* Ezek. 18.

the wicked man doth, shall he live; all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

the commonness of such apostacy makes it still the more terrifying.—Many there are who begin well, but few, very few, endure to the end. We see nothing more frequent than relapses into sin; nothing so rare as true

conversions.—Too many, after a long course of virtue and religion, have fallen away, and perished, as it were, in the very harbour. Alas! the fall of *Adam* is acted every day: After being purged from our old sins, we forfeit the benefit of baptismal innocence, and turn away from righteousness and grace.—This shews our infirmity, and is the almost daily case of every Christian. But the fall of a *Solomon*, a person eminent for piety, after intimate communion with God, and a long and diligent profession of his service, is a matter of just astonishment, and should make us tremble.—I often think there is nothing in all religion carries in it a more alarming idea than this possibility, yea, probability, of falling away from a state of grace.—From apostacy good Lord deliver us. The fear of this made *David* so often to beg of God, “To hold up his goings in his paths, “that his footsteps might not slip:—to try him, and “examine him; to seek the ground of his heart; to “see if there were any way of wickedness in him, “and to lead him in the way everlasting.”—But *Solomon* did not follow his own advice of *keeping his heart with all diligence*^f, and therefore he fell; for it is said, “His heart was turned from the Lord God of *Israel*^g.”—This treachery of the heart of man is the chief cause of our turning away from God. Another cause, assigned by the Apostle, is the neglect of *keeping under the body, and bringing it into subjection*^h; that is, not restraining the appetites and affections.

^f Prov. iv. 23.

^g 1 Kings xi. 9.

^h 1 Cor. ix. 27.

If these be indulged too freely, the unavoidable consequence will be, that we shall become *castaways*. And then, as the most heinous sins of the true penitent will never be mentioned to his condemnation or shame; so the brightest virtues, and most exalted acts of piety, shall not be mentioned or remembred to the advantage or excuse of the final apostate; but rather will most highly inflame his guilt, and inhance his shame and punishment.—What can be a greater indignity to God and religion, than, after a long trial and experience of his goodness, his wisdom, his truth, his love, to renounce his service, revolt to his enemy, and give the preference to Sin and Satan? The Psalmist tells us what shall become of such as thus turn aside unto their crooked ways:—"The Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquityⁱ." And St. Paul pronounces their sentence in that fearful passage to the *Hebrews*, "That it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance^k." These thoughts make me often tremble: And I have dwelt the longer on this case, as I often dread lest it should prove my own; and as I have, this day^l, heard a sermon on the subject of *Solomon's* fall, from 1 *Kings* xi. 9.

25. Yet ye say, *The way of the LORD is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?*

26. *When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die.*

Is not my way equal?]

Here God appeals to his own nature and essential justice. For the emphasis being on the word *My*, imports an impossibility that God's way, whose nature is not only just, but justice itself, should be otherwise than *equal*.—God cannot lie, or be unjust.—

ⁱ Ps. cxxv.

^k Chap. vi

^l 16 Sept. 1733.

27. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

28. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

29. Yet, saith the house of Israel, The way of the LORD is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

of God, is because their own are contrary thereto. They see not his wisdom in the works and dispensations of his providence, in the word of his grace, or the scheme of our redemption, even because they are blind, and without understanding. The only means to judge aright of our own ways, and the ways of God, is to *consider* the one and the other; to let reason, not passion or prejudice, the Divine will, not our own, direct our judgment.—And this is the first step towards repentance, and amendment of life.—*Because he CONSIDERETH, and turneth away from all his transgressions,—he shall surely live, he shall not die.*

30. Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD: repent, and turn yourselves from all your

Are not your ways unequal?]

Here again, the stress being laid on the word *Your*, is as plain a challenge to man to reflect on his own nature; that it is fallible at best, and capable of falling into error, as he is a frail and finite creature; much more as he hath, by his original fall, sunk into sin and corruption. How then can his ways be otherwise than *unequal*, seeing his will is perverse, and his judgment blinded with ignorance and error?—And indeed the only reason why men quarrel with the ways

As consideration, or the use of our reason, is the first step towards amendment (for a man must first come to himself, before he can come to God); the next step is an actual conversion. The sin-

transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

31. *Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

32. *For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live.*

ner therefore is here bidden not only to *consider* and *repent* of what he hath done amiss, but to *turn himself*; that is, not only to reflect on his misery and danger, and listen to the very principles of self-preservation, as well as common sense and reason, but actually to avoid what is destructive to him, and carefully to seek what is happy and beneficial.—Conversion then, or a faithful turning to God, must

be the next step in repentance.—And this will ever be so, where consideration is sincere, and reason hath been duly attended to. So the prodigal, in the Gospel, first came to himself, and then resolved to “*arise and go to his father.*”—This indeed is the act of man, as it is an act of natural reason, and a wise resolution consequent thereupon. God therefore is here introduced as commanding man to do what is in a man’s own power to do, and to *turn himself*. One use of which observation is evidently this, That we are not fettered and with-held by any arbitrary decree of predestination, but at full and free liberty^m both to will and to endeavour our own salvation. The proper act of God is to call and invite us by his word and Holy Spirit, and then to accept our endeavours, when we turn to him. But this conversion must be total and sincere; it must be a turning from *all*, yea, a *casting away* from us *all* our transgressions.—This is our part: But to *make us a new heart, and a new spirit*, is indeed quite out of the reach of nature; it is the work of God alone; and therefore most properly called by the apostle, a new creation, and the new

^m See Annotation at the end.

290 *The Seventeenth SUNDAY, &c. Ezek. 18.*

creature; it being such a thorough change of heart and principles as can be effected only by the same Divine power that created the world, and raised Christ from the dead. But altho' it be done by the same Almighty power, it is not done after the same manner; by an irresistible immediate act of omnipotence. It is made by means and motives, by the word and grace of God, &c.; man consenting and co-operating therewith. Wherefore, tho' God is pleased to command us to make us new hearts, and new spirits, it behoves us to refer that whole work, as well as ascribe the whole glory of the change, to him. Yea, when he bids us *turn*, let us, in an humble and conscious sense of our own weakness and insufficiency, say again, in the words of our Church, "Turn
"Thou us, O Lord, and So shall we be turned,"
&c. Amen.

On ver. 30. *At full and free liberty both to will, &c.*] This is agreeable to that doctrine of St. Paul (Rom. vi. 20.), *When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free to righteousness*; for so [ἐλευθεροί ἦτε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ] ought to be rendered, as it best agrees with the Apostle's sense, and the literal construction of his words in that passage. — See what hath been said concerning the liberty of our will, Proper Lesson for Tuesday in Whitsun-Week, (Deut. xxx. ver. 15.) with the note thereon.





The Eighteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

EZEKIEL, Chap. xx.

P R E F A C E.

THE instruction chiefly designed in this Lesson, seems to be levelled against hypocrisy and ingratitude.

Some of the elders of Israel come again to consult the prophet, concerning the will of God; but without any intention to follow it. They came indeed to enquire of the Lord, but more out of curiosity, than any sense of duty; rather to tempt God, than to obey him.

But, by the answer returned to these hypocrites, it appears: First, That God will not be mocked, and cannot be deceived: Secondly, That his punishments, as they are always just in the proportion and measure, so are they generally in their kind, and suitableness to the crime.

—The application of these Jews to the prophet, came from an heart not only insincere, but profanely bent to reject the counsel of God; it therefore meets with this dreadful, but most equitable and righteous sentence, that even the shew and appearance of true religion should be taken from them; their very hypocrisy, and pretence to piety, should cease and end in a reprobate sense, a final excision from, or absolute ignorance of, the true God:—

As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by them.

Nothing can be an heavier and more terrible judgment, than what is here pronounced against the contemptuous abuse of the means and opportunities of grace.——Such scoffers have that final sentence of condemnation passed upon them, even in this world, “Depart from me, ye “curst:” Consequently have already all of hell, but the torment.

And as this judgment was verified, on as many of those Jews, as renounced the worship of the true God, and turned heathens; and likewise upon all such of them as have since rejected the Messiah, and have now no temple nor altar, no priest nor prophet, whereby to enquire of, or worship, God, according to their own law; so does it also take hold of all those deceitful professors of Christianity, who, though they retain the form, yet deny the power, of Godliness; who, if they attend the public worship, do it for fashion only; who never bend the knee to their Maker in private, either in their families, or closets; who come to hear his word, not with a disposition to obey, but to cavil at, or despise it.——To such, the Scriptures are sealed up; and the gospel is hid to them^a.” Yet their pride imputes not the obscurity of those sacred writings to the natural defect of their own understanding, or (as we may rather say) to the just judgment of God, withholding the sense of his mysteries from them; but impiously deride the blessed word of the most high God, as false, or unintelligible; and the preachers of it, as a pack of fools. So that every faithful minister of God hath, in these our evil days, too much cause to say with the prophet in our Lesson, Ah Lord God! They say of me, Doth he not speak parables?

Nay, may we not add, that all Christians in general, who violate their baptismal vow, are here taxed; and ought to lay to heart the severe charge brought against

^a 2 Cor. iv. 3.

the antient people of God, for their ingratitude and hypocrisy.

For if those favours, which he shewed to them, in redeeming them from the bondage of Egypt, choosing them for his Church and People, giving them laws, which would insure to them a life of happiness, both here and hereafter; bringing them into a land flowing with milk and honey, which was the glory of all lands; if these favours, I say, laid that people under the strongest obligations of gratitude and duty to their Almighty benefactor; how inexcusable must we be (especially we of this most excellent Church) who have received far more distinguishing privileges and graces, if we neglect so great salvation! How much sorer will our punishment be, if we repay such inestimable benefits and mercies, with ingratitude and disobedience!

Nevertheless, the promise which, in this chapter, God makes to the Jews, "that he would restore a part of them to the land of their forefathers, upon their acknowledging and forsaking their sins," may afford us this comfort, that he will not utterly cast off his Church, nor forsake his inheritance; that he will always reserve a remnant amidst the greatest corruptions; that his severest judgments, are tempered and directed by mercy, being designed to amend, and not to destroy, to bring us first to a sense of our sins, and then to a sincere reformation: That he is ever ready to shew mercy, when we humble ourselves under his rod; in a word, that "he doth wait for us, that he may be gracious^b."

^b Isaiah xxx. 18.

The Eighteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

EZEKIEL, Chap. xx.

1. *AND it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, the tenth day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to enquire of the LORD, and sat before me.*

2. *Then came the word of the LORD unto me saying,*

3. *Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Are ye come to enquire of me? as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you.*

4. *Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them?—*

IN the seventh year after the captivity of *Jeboiachin*, and about five years before the taking of *Jerusalem*, this transaction happened at *Babylon*.—By comparing this with the Morning Lesson of last Sunday, (chap. xiv.) we may observe the two different kinds of hypocrisy, which the servants of God are subject to; namely, First, Hypocrisy of the understanding; when, thro' ignorance, the heart is deceiv'd, and the judgment corrupted, or misled, by some prevailing passion or prejudice. Secondly, Hypocrisy of the will, when the judgment is convinced of the truth, and conscious of the duty, but, through perverseness, or a desperate and reprobate sense, is determined not to obey; and, only for credit, convenience, or interest, observes the outward forms of religion. The elders, reprov'd in the xivth chapter, seem to have been of the first sort: These, who are reprehended in our present Lesson, are plainly of the latter. For this cause it is, that God treats these different sorts of hypocrites after so different a manner.

ner. The first, as persons labouring under a very dangerous, yet curable, distemper of the mind, he takes upon himself to manage [*I the Lord will answer him by myself*] it being impracticable for the art or discipline of man to treat or understand a case, which lies wholly in the heart. But the latter, as a desperate and incurable disease, he vouchsafes not to undertake; he positively refuses *to be enquired of* by such hardened sinners; he will not admit of any application from them, but leaves them, as past all hopes of recovery, to the judgment of the *son of man*; that is, not only to the censures of the Church, but to that dreadful and final sentence, which Christ, the *son of man*, and judge of quick and dead, shall pronounce upon them, “When he cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed.”

—Cause them to know the abominations of their fathers:

5. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I am the LORD your God.

The essential difference of the forementioned kinds of hypocrisy consists in this, that when it lies in the intellect, there may still be such remains and symptoms of the spiritual life, as give fair hopes of a recovery; but when it has reached the will and conscience, 'tis a manifest sign the spiritual life is quite extinguished. And what physician can cure, or to what purpose should means be used, when life itself is gone?—However, what is impossible with men, is not so with God: He still invites even such patients as are dead,

^c Jude 14, 15.

to be brought unto him; for he is both the physician and the means, the resurrection and the life. His medicines can restore from death; his voice can raise us even from the grave. This made the apostle say, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life^d."—For this reason it is, and because his mercies fail not, that he here continues to call to the reprobate *Jews*, and to all such as are dead in trespasses and sins; he speaks still to their outward senses, and sets before them the extreme folly, as well as ingratitude, of their revolt from God, after so many endearing marks of favour. And, as a motive most likely to affect such carnal hearts, he represents the advantages, even in point of temporal interest, which such sinners forego, by their forsaking the favour and protection of God. And is not the long detail of abused mercies, wherewith the *Jews* are here upbraided, too applicable to us, who live under the gospel-dispensation. If we consider our ways, and compare our lives with that holy rule which the Gospel directs, and which the life of Christ exemplifies to us, we shall find ourselves as far short of our engagements, and as ungrateful to our God and Saviour, as those hypocritical *Jews*, who are here reproved by the prophet.

By the phrase of *lifting up the hand*, is to be understood a solemn promise, or vow, (see *Gen. xiv. 22.*) which is usually made with an *uplifted*, or extended, hand^e. And what was this

6. *In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt, into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey,*

^d *Eph. v. 14.*

^e The same figure is observable in the *Latin* word *promittere*, which, in its native sense, signifies to *project*, or send forward; but with the word *manus*, or hand (which is still to be understood) it came, at length, to signify a *promise*. And to this also answers our *English* phrase, "I give you my hand," implying an absolute promise and assurance.

which is the glory of all lands :

7. *Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.*

8. *But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.*

9. *But I wrought for my names sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.*

promise to the *Israelites*, but the second covenant?—The words indeed are different, but the tenour and sense is the very same with our Christian covenant.—The words, *Cast ye away every man the abomination of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with idols*, correspond very plainly to those of our vow in baptism, “Renounce the
“poms and vanities of the
“world, the lusts of the
“flesh, and the works of
“the devil,” the chief of whose works is idolatry.—This, in one word, is repentance, the first part of our baptismal promise.—The ensuing words, *I am the Lord your God, &c.* express the second branch of our vow; to wit, that we should “believe the articles
“of faith.”—*But they rebelled against me, &c.*: That is to say, instead of keeping God’s holy will and commandments (which is the third part of the covenant) they proved false to their promise, and rebels to their God.—*They did not cast away, &c.*: That is, they did not make good the solemn promise they had made.—*Then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, &c.* Every sin in a Professor of religion, is of a much deeper dye and more enormous guilt, than in an heathen, because committed against greater light, and much stronger obligations; against the most solemn vows and the highest

298 *The Eighteenth SUNDAY* Ezek. 20.

highest favours: 'Tis an act of rebellion, aggravated and enhanced by the basest ingratitude.

—*But I wrought for my name sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, &c.*] The name of Christ, which we bear, is our safeguard and defence; not only our greatest honour, but our best security and protection.—Although we often deserve much greater punishment than the heathen, yet, that the blessed name of Christ, by which we are called, may not be *polluted and profaned before the heathen*, he still spares and reprieves us from the judgments we deserve.—Thus “the name of the Lord” [this saving name JESUS] “is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are safe^f.”—“My mouth shall therefore speak the praise of the Lord; and let all flesh give thanks unto this his holy name for ever and ever.”

—*Hail Son of God, Saviour of men, thy name
Shall be the copious matter of my song
Henceforth, and never shall my harp thy praise
Forget, nor from thy Father's praise disjoin.*

MILTON.

10. *Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness.*

11. *And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them.*

12. *Moreover also, I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I*

There is no admission into the heavenly Canaan, except we go forth out of the land of Egypt; i. e. except we renounce the world. But still there is a wilderness in the way, a course of trial, and state of probation.—The Christian is no more exempt from this, than the Jew. Our Lord himself, after baptism, was led into the wilderness to be tempted and tried; and so must we.

^f Prov. xviii. 10.

And

am the LORD that sanctify them. — And what are the statutes and judgments of God, which he shews us; what are his sabbaths, and all the holy seasons of public worship and praise, but the terms and limits of our duty, and the signs and tokens of our sincerity? He that walks in the laws of God, is in the way of life, because he obeys; *he shall live in them*:—He that observes his sabbaths, is sure he is in the Right way, and that he loves God, because he uses the Means.—Where works and love concur together, we cannot but be safe, we cannot but be holy.—Such men alone shall know, that it is the LORD that sanctifies them; yea, shall know and feel, that the Holy Ghost, who “sanctifieth them, and all the elect people of God,” is *Jehovah* the LORD.—This is a sure and infallible sign between him and them, of the union there is between God and the soul of every true believer.

13. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness to consume them.

14. But I wrought for my names sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out.

15. Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not

The Wise man tells us, “The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.” (*Prov. xvi. 4.*) His glory is the rule and measure of all his works, and especially of his dealings with the sons of men. And what is his glory, but his goodness and his holiness? Good is his only end in every design, even, because he is good; and, in doing good, he consults only the glory of his great name, because that good is himself; he is not only good, but goodness itself.—He is too great, to do any thing but for his own glory; too holy, to will any thing

bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands:

16. *Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.*

17. *Nevertheless, mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness.*

18. *But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols.*

19. *I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments and do them:*

20. *And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God.*

21. *Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths, then I said I would*

thing but what is just; too gracious, to intend any thing but for our good.—On the same principle ought we also to proceed in all our designs and actions. Whatever is not built on this foundation of God's goodness, and sovereign holiness, is not for his sake; and will therefore be destroyed, because it is contrary to his glory.—

Whether therefore he raise us to honour in the sight of men, for any good that we do; or whether he forbear to pour out his fury upon us, and punish us, for our sins; let us not imagine that either is done for our sakes, but for his own; that so we may not be puffed up, but fear.—If the wicked be suffered to prosper, and to have the upper hand in the world, let them not presume, but tremble: All is done for his great name's sake; all is directed to his own glory.

—His methods of dispensing mercy and justice, in this life, is a mystery, which has often puzzled mankind. But when the great day of retribution comes, and draws aside the curtain from our eyes, the whole scene of the divine Œconomy will then stand open and exposed to the

pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness.

22. *Nevertheless I withdrew my hand, and wrought for my names sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth.*

23. *I lifted up mine hand & unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries;*

24. *Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers idols.*

25. *Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live.*

But how can this consist with the goodness of God, to give statutes that are not good? Is he the author of evil? Or can he, who is the giver of every good and perfect gift, give any thing that is *not perfectly good*?—This, according to the letter, carries an imputation which, at first sight, is contrary to the very nature of God, as well as to the whole tenour of his word, and particularly to what we have just now observed.—To reconcile this seeming contradiction, the marginal note in our Bible, refers us to *Psalms lxxxi. 12. to Rom. i. 24, &c.* Which passages explain it of that judicial blindness, and hardness of heart, whereby ill men are given up to a reprobate sense, to uncleanness, &c. through the lusts of their own hearts ^h.—But it seems rather

^g On ver. 15. and 23. *I lifted up mine hand.*] As the Hand is lifted up in making a solemn promise (ver. 6.) the same Gesture is often used in menaces and threats. And in this last sense it is to be understood here.

^h See on *Ezek. xiv. ver. 9.*

to be meant of the positive and ceremonial institutions of the levitical law, which, in themselves, were not properly *good*, but mere indifferent things; rather bonds and restrictions, and a kind of penance, laid on that wayward refractory people, for their stubbornness and hardness of heart, than for any spiritual intrinsic goodness that was in them. Such as *St. Peter* calls therefore “a yoke, which neither “ they nor their fathers could bear¹.” And of which *St. Paul* speaks, that “by him [Christ] all that believe are justified from all things, from which they “ could not be justified by the law of *Moses*.”—Now, properly and strictly speaking, the law of *Moses* was that particular body of ceremonial and judicial laws, which was distinct from the moral law. For the moral law, contained in the Ten Commandments, was in force before, and equally binding to the *Israelites* and to all mankind, being founded in their own real, intrinsic, and eternal virtue and obligation. Whereas the positive laws of *Moses* had no other efficacy, or goodness in them, than what they derived from the mere authority of the lawgiver. And, as the obligation was merely positive and arbitrary, calculated only for the present state of that stiff-necked people, so their duration was only temporary; to be abolished and repealed by the Gospel.—Moreover, if our Lord affirm, that, strictly and truly speaking, None is good, save God,” not even the angels, no nor the son of man himself, as man; well might it be said of their carnal ordinances (as *St. Paul* calls them) that they were *not good*; not capable, of their own nature, to give life and perfection:—They were *judgments*, whereby they should *not live*.—And if these things, of God’s own institution, were *not good*, how much less may we call the things of this life *good*? Worldly men may call and think them good, and *good* things; but in their nature they are

¹ *Acts* xiii. 39.

not so; but too often evil in their fruits; indifferent at best, and only *good* by a sanctified use of them; or, rather, they are the instruments of good, if we use them aright, and to the glory of him that gave them.

26. *And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end, that they might know, that I am the LORD.*

They who abuse the gifts and blessings of God, to an impious and sinful purpose, must expect to be *polluted in their Own gifts*. Their very prayers and offerings become an abomination; the calves of their lips, the fruit of their body, their *gifts* of grace and nature, both spi-

ritual and temporal blessings, are defiled and cursed. —These *Israelites* had the honour and happiness of the oracles of God; they were distinguished, by extraordinary favours, from all other people of the world. But they forsook their own mercies, they started aside like a broken bow, they kept not the covenant of their God, and refused to walk in his law. He gave them up therefore to their own hearts lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations; so that, contrary to the very dictates of nature, as well as reason and religion, they *caused to pass through the fire all that opened the womb*: They offered up their sons and their daughters, their very first born, unto devils. —The like neglect of God was the first cause of that blindness and insatiation, which overspread the whole Gentile world (see *Rom. i.*) And shall we Christians escape, if we neglect so great salvation; so much greater light, such means of grace, such glorious hopes, such invaluable mercies? —God is happiness itself; his *gifts* are blessings indeed: They that forsake him, seek death; they that reject his blessing, choose a curse: “They that sin, are enemies to their own *“ life *.”* —This is the necessary consequence of so un-

* *Tobit* xii. 10.

happy a conduct. And yet, so admirable is the goodness, as well as wisdom, of divine justice, that while it makes sin to be its own punishment, it makes that punishment a call to repentance, and a means of grace and mercy.—He *makes us desolate, to the end that we may know that he is the LORD*; and to know him is life eternal.

27. *Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me.*

28. *For when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink offerings.*

29. *Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? and the name whereof is called Bamah unto this day.*

Alas! How very prone is man to desert and fall away from God!—What do we every day, but repeat the fall of our first parents¹?—No sooner were these *Israelites* put in possession of the land of *Canaan*, which was the glory of all lands, but the first thing they did, was to mark out with their eye, what places would be most commodious for their idolatrous services.—God, by his law, had limited to one place only, the offering of their vows and sacrifices; but they, in contempt of his command, had their *Bamahs* and altars on every high hill; so that, from the frequency of this superstitious practice, the places of public worship came, in time, to be called *Bamah*, or high place.—

This may seem a monstrous ingratitude and perverseness in the Jew; and yet, which of us Christians are free? —When we receive any special blessing from God,

¹ See 2 *Esdras*, chap. iii. ver. 26.

either riches, honours, health, or fame, is not some vanity or criminal pleasure, the very first thing we think of? Is not pride immediately at work to find out *high places*? Some ways and means to magnify self and offend God?—'Tis monstrous, and yet how common, for even those that name the Name of Christ, to prefer every trifle before heaven, and heavenly things; to think of every thing but of God; to read any book but the bible; to go to any house more freely than to Church!

30. *Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations?*

31. *For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols even unto this day: and shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you.*

32. *And that which cometh into your mind, shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.*

Can there be conceived a more astonishing instance than this, of the blindness and stupidity of the heart of man?—God had heaped on this people the most uncommon favours; the manner of his redeeming them from the bondage of *Egypt*, was as kind, as it was miraculous. The prodigies he wrought for them, by the hand of *Moses*, of *Josbua*, and others, infinitely surpassed all that ever the most fabulous brain of antiquity could invent. And yet this people, who had seen and tasted of these high favours, who had these facts recorded in their Scriptures, who had them continually inculcated to them by their prophets, and could not but know, that the God, who had done

such great things for them, was the eternal God, a God infinite in goodness, omnipotent in power; were, nevertheless, so ingrateful to their almighty benefactor, as to choose stocks and stones before him,

so foolish, as to prefer the vain superstitions of heathen idolatry, to his holy and most reasonable service.—But if in this we see the desperate corruption, and amazing obduracy, of the heart of man; see we also the extreme danger of conversing too freely with the world, and the infectious influence of bad example.—How should all that are dedicated to God, and profess his service, avoid, with the utmost care and caution, the conversation of those who have forsaken him; when we see how the commerce and correspondence of the neighbouring heathen nations, could draw away *Israel*, to change the living and true God for dumb and senseless idols?—But is not this, in point of worship, the very case of superstitious Papists? Is it not, in morals, the too common case of Protestants?—The Romanists follow the heathen nations in their idols: We, in their vices and scandalous immoralities.

33. *As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you.*

34. *And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out.*

35. *And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.*

36. *Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of*

Not only the captive *Jews*, in the primary sense, and the Christian Church in a secondary meaning, might apply what is here said, to themselves; but every private Christian may, herein, observe the common method and discipline, which divine justice makes use of in reclaiming us from sin. First, By some severe judgment, of sickness or affliction, the conscience is awakened;—*Surely with a mighty hand, and with fury poured out, will I rule over them*: Secondly, Next, the sinner is separated from all vain conversation, insnaring amusements, and delusive pleasures;—and this,

Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD.

37. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.

38. And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

this, by some wholesome but ungrateful violence to flesh and blood:—*I will bring you out from among the people, with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out.* Thirdly, He is stripped of all his worldly comforts, made desolate and solitary: And this is typified by the wilderness which the Israelites were brought into.—Here, God is said to plead with the sinner face to face; that is, he sets before him all his past offences, their guilt and their danger, till he bring them to a thorough conviction and abhorrence of his sin; causing him thus to pass under the rod, for this blessed and salutary end, that he may bring him back to the bond of the covenant, which he had broken.—Fourthly, By a thorough reformation he purges out from the heart all rebellious affections, all sinful lusts and passions, by which it had transgressed his laws, and opposed his will. These vicious and unruly affections, are but strangers and sojourners to the soul, and to the true original nature of man; they are therefore to be rooted out, as the seven devoted nations of Canaan were.—*They shall not enter into the land of promise; they have neither part nor lot there. I will purge out from among you the rebels; I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn; they shall not enter into the land of Israel, the heavenly Jerusalem; for “flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

39. As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD, Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter

Two things, so contrary to each other, are here spoken to the house of Israel, as may seem to carry a contradiction in them.—Ver. 39. They

also, if ye will not hearken unto me : but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.

40. For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land serve me : there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first-fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things.

41. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered, and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.

42. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers.

43. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled, and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that ye have committed.

44. And ye shall know that I am the LORD,

are bidden to go and serve their idols, &c. and yet, in the very next verse, it is said, *All the house of Israel shall serve me*, &c.—But the difficulty may be solved, and the difference reconciled, several ways. First, By observing, that in Scripture the term *Israel* bears two very different acceptations, according to that noted distinction of St. Paul, “ All “ are not *Israel*, who are of “ *Israel*.” — Some are reprobate, some elect. To the first sort therefore, secondly, it is said, *Go ye, serve ye every one his idols*. And the character of these is plainly distinguished from the others, by their refusing to hearken unto God.—Such as will not hear and obey the word of God, although they be of the house of *Israel*; i. e. have been admitted into the Church of Christ, will, nevertheless, be rejected as none of his people, as mere heathens, if they reject his authority, and withdraw their obedience.—None shall enjoy the privileges of the baptismal covenant, who refuse or neglect to observe the terms.—But, Thirdly, *The house of Israel*, to whom the promises of grace

*When I have wrought with
ou for my names sake, not
according to your wicked
ways, nor according to your
corrupt doings, O ye house
of Israel, saith the Lord
GOD.*

grace and favour are made,
(ver. 40.) are described to
be such and such only, as
are in God's *holy mountain*,
yea, in the mountain of the
height of Israel; that is to
say, not only in the Church,
but of the communion of
saints; not only nominal, but living and true mem-
bers of Christ.—*There will I accept them,—there will
I require your offerings, &c.*—God will accept no offer-
ings, but what are made to him in his Church; he
will reward none, but such as are *required*, by his
own institutions, and sanctified by his grace. They
that worship him, must do it in spirit and in truth;
with true repentance, with faith unfeigned, and sin-
cere obedience.—To *know*, and therefore *loath*, our-
selves for our sins, is true repentance:—To know,
and therefore *fear*, the Lord for his judgments; yea,
to know, and yet to love him, for his goodness to-
wards wretches so unworthy of mercy, is faith work-
ing by love.—No repentance or faith is true, without
good works; no good works, or obedience, are ge-
nuine and sincere, without love.

45. *Moreover, the word
of the LORD came unto
me, saying,*

46. *Son of man, set thy
face toward the south, and
drop thy word toward the
south, and prophesy against
the forest of the south field:*

47. *And say to the forest
of the south, Hear the word
of the LORD, Thus saith
the Lord GOD, Behold, I
will kindle a fire in thee,*

This is a prophecy against
Jerusalem, which lay to the
south of Chaldea, from whence
this prophecy was uttered.
God compares that city to
a forest, and her inhabitants
to trees; and foreshews that
the judgment, which was to
come upon her, should be
like a great fire, a general
conflagration, sparing none,
not even the green trees,
much less the dry. Our
Lord made use of this pro-
verbial

310 *The Eighteenth SUNDAY* Ezek. 20.

and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burnt therein.

48. And all flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it: it shall not be quenched.

49. Then said I, Ah Lord GOD, they say of me, Doubt he not speak parables?

verbal saying on the like occasion, to the same city, and in the very same sense.

“If they do these things in “a green tree, what shall be “done in a dry.” *Luke xxiii.*

31.; i. e. If good men, who are like trees planted by the water side, and therefore ever green, suffer so much in this world; if our Lord Jesus Christ, who was the very tree of life, full of the sap of grace and truth, was treated with so much rigour for the sins of others; what

have not the wicked to fear, who being without God, and without Christ, are no other than *dry* and barren wood; “*Trees*, whose fruit withereth, without “fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots^m,” and therefore doomed to bear the whole weight of God’s fiery indignation for their own crimes. Yet, “If a “man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, “but let him glorify God on this behalf; for the “time is come, that judgment must begin at the “house of God; and if it first begin at us, what “shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel “of God?”—’Tis only at the foot of the cross that we can frame a right estimate of the justice and mercy of God.

^m *Jude*

ⁿ *1 Pet. iv. 16, 17.*



The Eighteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

EZEKIEL, Chap. xxiv.

Under the parable of a boiling pot is represented the manner, as well as cause, and certainty, of the destruction of Jerusalem. And by the sudden death of the prophet's wife, and his not mourning for her, is shewn, as by a sign, that the calamity of the Jews shall be inevitable, and beyond all expression of sorrow.

1. *AGAIN in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*

2. *Son of man, Write thee the name of the day, even of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day.*

THE æra, or date of time, here mentioned, is taken from the beginning of Jeboiachin's captivity, or of Zedekiah's reign, who immediately succeeded him, being made king by Nebuchadnezzar, in the room of Jeboiachin his nephew.—From the tenour of this passage, and the precise description of the time, when the event it

speaks of happened, we may draw the following reflections for our spiritual use and instruction. First, We learn, that God's judgments are inevitable, and

will certainly come to pass, except they be prevented by repentance. Secondly, By the account so particularly set down of the *year, month, and day*, when the siege of *Jerusalem* began, which had so often been foretold, we are taught, that Divine justice hath fixed the time, the exact time, when vengeance shall be executed upon hardened and impenitent sinners; that mercy is limited, and the day of grace determined to continue so long, and no longer.—So the Psalmist, “If they will not turn, he hath bent his bow, and “made it ready^a.” So our Lord, to the same wicked city *Jerusalem*, “Hadst thou known, in this thy “day, the things that belong unto thy peace! but now, “they are hid from thine eyes^b.” So to the old world, “My spirit shall not always strive with man: “The end of all flesh is come before me.—Behold, I “will destroy them with the earth^c.” Then follows the precise date, not only of the year and month, but of the very day, when the flood began^d.—Hear this, ye sinners, who put off your conversion from day to day:—Hear this, and tremble!—Thirdly, In the case of *Zedekiah*, his succeeding to the throne of his nephew yet living; his accepting and holding the title of king, without any note of divine prohibition or displeasure; some persons, who too much blend politics with their religion, may learn, that they need not lay so much stress on what they call hereditary right: That “the kingdom [or regal authority] is the Lords^e; “and he giveth it to whomsoever he will^f:”—Sometimes conferring it by his own immediate interposal; sometimes by the hands of others, who act in subordination to his sovereign power.

By the *pot* is meant the city of *Jerusalem* (as it is explained in the 6th verse). By the *good pieces* may be un-

^a *Psal.* vii. 12. ^b *Luke* xix. 41, 42. ^c *Gen.* vi. 2. ^d *Ch.* vii. 11, 12, 13. ^e *Psf.* xxii. ^f *Dan.* i. 17.

Lord GOD, Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it.

4. *Gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder, fill it with the choice bones.*

5. *Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, and make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of it therein,*

consume them. The great numbers and strength of the besieged should be so far from defending or saving the city, that they should rather serve as fuel piled on the fire to increase the flame, and to destroy it.—See *Jerem. xxvii. ver. 8, 11, 12, 13, 14. Ch. xxxiv. 21, 22. Ch. xxxviii. 17, 18.* where this destruction of *Jerusalem* by fire is foretold.

6. *Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Wo to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it; bring it out piece by piece, let no lot fall upon it.*

derstood, the men of greatest note and eminence; yea, all sorts of persons are here included; some as the *thigh*, or supports of the nation; some as *shoulders*, or magistrates and rulers of the commonwealth; others as *bones*, the military, or stoutest and most valiant among the people.—By the *fire* may be meant the wrath of God, or *Chaldean* army employed as the ministers of his wrath to

Let no lot fall upon it.]

This is meant of the people in general, that none of them should escape; there should be no casting *lots* for saving some, and destroying others, as was wont to be done on the taking of other cities; but that All should be con-

sumed.—As they afterwards were, either by pestilence, famine, sword, or captivity, till none remained in the land; the city and whole country being *utterly emptied* (as *Isaiah* speaks, chap. xxiv. 3.), and left desolate.—To these fearful executions, it is said, they should be brought out *piece by piece*, to signify, that they should not be consumed at once, but by degrees, and by little and little, to make their punishment the more pungent and sensible.

So

314 *The Eighteenth SUNDAY* Ezek. 24.

7. *For her blood is in the midst of her, she set it upon the top of a rock, she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust:*

So far were the *Jews* of that age from concealing, or being ashamed of, their infamous practices, and acts of bloodshed, and cruelty, that they committed them open-

ly, and in the sight of the world. They had no regard to decency or shame; they rather boasted of, than excused, the most horrid impieties.—And this is still the nature, and desperate gradation, of wilful sin. If it be harboured *in the midst* of us, and gain admission into the heart and affections, it soon breaks forth into action; abandons all modesty, and fear of God and man, and *sets its blood upon the top of a rock*: It grows impudent, yea, proud of the most profligate crimes; is so far from *pouring its blood upon the ground*, and *covering it with the dust*, that is, from seeking privacy, or making excuse, that it rather triumphs in its wickedness, and glories in its shame.

8. *That it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance: I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered.*

Nay, wilful sin not only breaks through all restraints of natural conscience, as well as all sanctions of laws human and divine, but it proceeds even to dare the justice of Heaven to *come up to take*

vengeance; to *come up* to this *rock*, where the sinner hath strengthened himself in his wickedness, and vainly imagines himself to be as secure, as he is public and barefaced.—It is an old observation, that nothing is more audacious than detected vice: It makes its very crimes to be its *rock* and refuge; and defends, without shame, what it can no longer conceal.—But observe we also, the just judgment of God, which punishes, not only in proportion, but in kind. *Jerusalem* had set her blood *upon the top of the rock*; God answers, *I also have set it upon a rock*; that is to say, not only in public view, to expose it to the world, but to fix its guilt as *on a rock*, so as neither to be

covered, nor done away.—This is the voice and answer of Divine Justice, and will inevitably take hold of all hardened and impenitent sinners. But, even here, the believing penitent hears the still small voice of Divine Mercy; hears the blood of *Jesus* speaking better things, and pointing out a *rock*, on which, if our sins be set by repentance and faith, they shall surely be covered; yea, blotted out as though they had never been.—“For that rock is *Christ*.”

9. *Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Wo to the bloody city, I will even make ² the pile for fire great.*

10. *Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burnt.*

11. *Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed.*

12. *She hath wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her: her scum shall be in the fire.*

13. *In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.*

14. *I the LORD have*

What was hereby foretold of the city of *Jerusalem*, in a typical manner, came afterwards to be literally and minutely fulfilled upon her.—Her most crying sin was murder and bloodshed; she is therefore described as a *pot* or caldron full of raw and bloody flesh, cut in pieces by the butcher, to be boiled. And God tells her, that he himself will *make the pile for fire*, yea, make it great; large enough to boil, yea, to *consume* both flesh and bones, and afterwards to burn the very *pot* itself, when emptied of all that was in it, that so its *filthiness*, and the very *scum* that was in it, might be *consumed*.—Thus he threatens, and thus he dealt with that reprobate people and city. By his four fore judgments, sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity (which are compared to a

² Heb. Even I will make.

316 The Eighteenth SUNDAY Ezek. 24.

spoken it, it shall come to pass, and I will do it, I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings shall they judge thee, saith the Lord G O D.

great pile of wood set on fire), *Jerusalem* was quite emptied of its inhabitants, and afterwards burnt with fire by the *Chaldeans*, and reduced to ashes.—As an instance and proof of her impenitence, and therefore unworthiness of any further overtures of

mercy, God tells her, He had *purged her before, but she was not purged*;—that is, he had sent many sharp judgments, as so many medicines to correct and *purge* away her corruptions, but without effect.—No other way remained, but to give her up to ruin and destruction.—In what befel this incorrigible people, we may read the fate of other states, who follow their example. Every private sinner also, who refuses to hear the rod of divine correction, and will not be reformed, may here likewise read his own destiny;—for, except we repent, we shall all likewise perish.

15. *Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*

16. *Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down.*

17. *Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men.*

18. *So I spake unto the people in the morning, and*

Another emblem of the approaching calamity, which was to befall the *Jewish* nation, was the sudden death of the prophet's *wife*. A wife most tenderly beloved, and the *desire of his eyes*; yet was she to be taken from him *with a stroke*. Accordingly she dies in the evening, as had been foretold in the morning. This, happening on the self-same day, on which the king of *Babylon* began the siege of *Jerusalem* (as was shewn to the prophet in the foregoing vision), not only proves the omniscience and veracity of God, who

at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.

who ordereth all things according to the good pleasure of his will, and is present at once in every place; but sets before us another judgment which was to befall that people, that, in after times, their church, as well as state, should be dissolved, and taken from them.—The foregoing parable against their city was a figure of the one; this, of the death of the prophet's wife, was a type of the other. And, although the latter did not finally happen till after the coming of Christ, who appeared towards the end of the world (as the Scripture phrases it), and the *evening* of time, yet, by the death of the prophetess, is plainly fore-shewn, that the *Jewish* church was to have an end, and never to be restored.—This may be the reason why the prophet is forbidden to *mourn* and *weep* for the loss of her: Yea, to forbear all signs of sorrow or concern.—It was the custom of mourners among the *Jews* to go bareheaded and barefoot (so *David* for *Abshalom*)^h; to cover *the lips* with the hand, as men do when they are pensive; and *to eat the bread of men*; i. e. what the neighbours used to send in to such as mourned, who were apt to neglect themselves through over-much sorrow. All these tokens and expressions of grief the prophet is commanded to *forbear*.—The Apostle uses the same similitude, when he tells us, “The Law is deadⁱ:” Wherefore we also, who are delivered from the law (that is, the *Jewish* œconomy, or law of *Moses*), “that being “dead wherein we were held,” have no reason to sorrow, but rather to rejoice.—And our rejoicing will best be expressed, by our serving (as the Apostle exhorts), “in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness “of the letter.”

It is well to be inquisitive after the sense and meaning of God's word. Curiosity,

19. *And the people, said unto me, Wilt thou tell us*

^h 2 Sam. xv. 30.

ⁱ Rom. vii. 6.

318 *The Eighteenth* SUNDAY Ezek. 24.

what these things are to us, that thou dost so?

20. *Then I answered them, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*

21. *Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters, whom ye have left, shall fall by the sword.*

22. *And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men.*

23. *And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep, but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one towards another.*

24. *Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do: and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.*

or the desire of knowledge, is one of the strongest passions in the nature of man; and it is never employed to better use than in searching out the truths of Scripture, and consulting the prophets and ministers of the word, *what these things are to us.*—

What they were to the *Jews*, we have already observed: What they are to *us*, is of more importance to know.—

The *Jews* are here told, that, when all these judgments shall have been brought upon them, and, particularly, when their church is taken from them (as it afterwards was, and hath been now for many ages), they shall then know, what they would not believe before, that Christ, who assuredly is the person here speaking to them, is the *Lord GOD*.—Of this we have spoken elsewhere; and may the event of the *Jews* conversion, in coming to the knowledge of Christ, verify the remark in its fullest accomplishment: But to bring it home to ourselves, and

know *what these things are to us*, we may more profitably add, that, in like manner, the sinner is chastened by sundry afflictions; the *desire of his eyes*, that is to say, the pleasures, honours, &c. of the world, are taken from him; and no end or respite of his troubles appear. If this bring him to know *Jesus Christ*,

Christ, that he is the *Lord GOD*, *i. e.* to a true faith and sincere repentance, well and happy shall he be. But to cry and moan, and pine away, for the effects, more than for the cause, of his iniquities; for his sufferings, rather than for his sins; is altogether fruitless and vain.—The only wise course to be taken, in such a case, and the only right use of afflictions, is to learn Christ, and him crucified; to know, that, as man, he hath suffered for our sins; that, as God, he hath satisfied for them.—This faith is the only true faith, and the only remedy for every affliction, every sorrow; because it is the only remedy for sin. It is he that saveth his people from their sins, and, consequently, from all misery and trouble. Yea, Lord, “this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only “true God, and JESUS CHRIST, whom Thou hast “sent^k.”

25. *Also thou son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters;*

26. *That he that escapeth in that day, shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears?*

27. *In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb, and thou shalt be a sign unto them, and they shall know that I am the LORD.*

In the xxxiii. chap. we have an account of the exact accomplishment of this prediction. There it is said, ver. 21. “It came to pass, in the “twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, “in the fifth day of the “month, that one, that had “escaped out of *Jerusalem*, “came unto me, saying, “The city is smitten. Now “the hand of the Lord was “upon me in the evening, “afore he that escaped came; “and had opened my mouth “until he came to me in the “morning, and my mouth “was opened, and I was no “more dumb.” Thus, what

^k *John xvii. 3.*

220 *The Eighteenth SUNDAY, &c.* Ezek. 24.

is here foretold in our Lesson [*In that day shall thy mouth be opened, &c.*] came literally to pass, on the very day the messenger arrived with the news of *Jerusalem* being taken.—Both these events were evident proofs of *Ezekiel's* being a true prophet. But this testimony, to the truth of his inspiration, was given, not so much for his sake, to do him honour with the people, as to convince the people of the truths of God delivered by his mouth, that so they might the more diligently attend to God's word; might believe and repent.—It is God then that *opens* the mouths of his ministers; He it is, that makes them eloquent and fine preachers, not that they may be *admired*, but that they may instruct their hearers, and turn many to righteousness.





The Ninteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

DANIEL, Chap. iii.

P R E F A C E.

THIS Lesson presents us with sundry most useful Instructions.

If the golden idol which Nebuchadnezzar set up to be worshipped, was the image of himself (as some expositors^a, with great probability suppose), this will represent to us the impious ambition of pride, that what it ultimately aims at, is no less than self-deification; even to make ourselves gods, and set up our image for all the

^a Dr. Prideaux says this image was made in honour of Bel his God. But Lyra supposes it was his own; and his reasons for it are, 1st, That he did not worship it himself. 2dly, A distinction is made between this image, and *his* gods, ver. 12. 3dly, It had been long before predicted by the prophet *Isaiab* (chap. xiv. 14.), That this king would arrogate to himself divine honour: "I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High." And probably the interpretation of his dream by *Daniel* (chap. ii.), "That himself was the golden head of the image which he had seen," together with the great-titles and power conferred on this king, might give him the hint to erect this prodigious image of gold to his vanity. Pride also appears to have been this prince's predominant vice: This dictated to him that boastful speech, "Is not this great *Babylon*, which I have builded," &c. chap. iv. ver. 30.

world to fall down to and worship.—To be as God, was the accursed arrogance of Lucifer, and the fatal ambition of the first man.—In process of time the devil did set up himself for God, and prevailed on besotted man to worship him. We also find in history many instances of princes (besides Nebuchadnezzar) who assumed to themselves divine honours.

Hence we may learn not only the monstrous extravagance, but the diabolical nature, of pride; that it strikes at the very throne of the Almighty; that it is an immediate rebellion against God, striving to cast him out of the world, as he cast it out of heaven; and substituting its image (which is corrupted self) in his stead, to be worshipped and adored.—Every man, where this accursed principle reigns in the heart, is, or would be, a Nebuchadnezzar; having it at least in his desire, if it be not in his power, to make all others to fall down to him, and worship the idol his pride has set up.

This is too frequent a case, even among Christians, even those who are otherwise serious and reformed: Their dispute “in the way” (that is, in this life) is often the same with that of the disciples (Mark ix. 34.) “who shall be the greatest.”

All those also are guilty of this self-deism, who set up their own wills, humours, opinions, or commands, for others implicitly to submit to: Whether they be kings, who exact laws contrary to the laws of nature, or the revealed will of God; or heretics, who set up any doctrines contrary to the truth of his holy word; or tyrants, who persecute it; yea, all men of power, who exact an arbitrary obedience to their authority; all rich men, who expect an absolute deference to their superior wealth, and require that all should fall down to their image of gold; all that arrogate an unlimited submission to their eloquence, wit, or judgment; all that seek universal respect to their persons, admiration of their beauty, parts, or any other advantages natural or acquired; in a word, all that love to have the pre-eminence on any account whatsoever, are equally usurpers of the Divine prerogative, and differ
nothing

nothing from Nebuchadnezzar, but in the size or materials of their several images.

But if from the dark shades of this history, namely, pride, envy, and revenge, we turn our eyes to the noble virtues, and heroic conduct, of the three faithful servants of God, how admirable is their constancy! how undaunted their courage! how meek, and yet how brave, is their resolution! how steadfast their faith in God! how chearful, and how patient, their submission to the Divine will! Hence then we may learn what the true Christian courage is; that it consists in overcoming the terrors, as well as pleasures, of sin; in bearing both fortunes with equal composure of mind; neither exalted with honour, nor depressed with danger or disgrace; that it is such a firmness of mind, as dares disobey the command, as well as contemn the golden promises, of the greatest prince upon earth, whenever they interfere with virtue; that can chearfully pay a passive, when active obedience would be a crime; can steadily adhere to principle in the midst of a false and wicked world; can chuse death, rather than violate conscience; and part with all, rather than offend GOD.—This is the true courage, this is the right and genuine fortitude, according to our English poet,

—He's only great that dares be good.

Or, as the Roman poet elegantly describes the character of the morally just and virtuous man^b;

The man resolv'd and steady to his trust,
Inflexible to ill, and obstinately just,
May the rude rabbles insolence despise,
Their senseless clamours, and tumultuous cries.
The tyrant's fierceness he beguiles,
And the stern brow, and the harsh voice, defies,
And with superior greatness smiles.

^b Hor. *od. l. 3.*—*Iustum & tenacem propositi virum, &c.*

324 *The Nineteenth SUNDAY* Dan. 3.

*Should the whole frame of nature round him break,
In ruin and confusion burl'd,
He, unconcern'd, would bear the mighty crack,
And stand secure amidst a falling world.*

Or rather, as an apostle more truly defines the true Christian fortitude, and the principle on which it is grounded, —“ *This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith^c.*”—Our faith; that is to say, the faith which we Christians hold and profess; the faith in Christ, the Christian religion.—In a word, this is that ghostly strength which is one of the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Ghost, which he bestows in confirmation, and which none can be possessed of, but by the gift of God, and grace of his Holy Spirit^d.

The Nineteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

DANIEL, Chap. iii.

The triumph of piety and truth over error, envy, and fear.

1. **N**ebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

2. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather toge-

ABOUT seventeen years after the dream concerning the four general monarchies, which Daniel had interpreted to king Nebuchadnezzar, the same king made an image of gold of a prodigious size.—In honour of what god it was set up, is not said; but, if we con-

^c 1 John v. 4.

^d See more on Ezek. ii. 6.

ther the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image, which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

3. Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

4. Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

5. That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psalter, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up.

6. And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

sider the magnificence, the cost, the grandeur, of the idol, the sweet melody, and harmonious concert, both of music and unanimity, wherewith the worship of it was commanded and performed, how may Christians blush to see their service of the most high God, the Lord of heaven and earth, outdone by the superstition of this heathen king and his people! how far short do we fall of these idolaters measure!—When we are to dedicate our gold unto God, how sparing in our oblations! how slovenly and ununiform are we in our public devotions! how disagreeing and divided in our principles and practice!—Alas! how few amongst us follow the example of these Babylonians unity and order!—Happy were it if such zeal as theirs had our light; or our light and knowledge were animated with their warmth and zeal!—These ignorant Gentiles, and those unhappy Christians, who have been taught to believe, that ignorance is the mother of devotion, will rise up in judgment against our indifference; for superstition itself

7. *Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.*

8. *Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near and accused the Jews.*

9. *They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.*

10. *Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image :*

11. *And whose falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.*

12. *There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: these men, O king, have not regarded thee, they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

malice and envy, to do the greater mischief.

is better than lukewarm piety, and a knowledge without zeal.—It is very probable, that envy was the plotter and contriver of this whole machine; that it was this evil spirit in his courtiers, which prompted the king to that extravagant folly, under pretence indeed of doing him honour; but in truth to ruin the three innocent youths, and lay a snare for their destruction.

—In our Evening Lesson we find the same restless spirit of envy projecting the very same scheme of pretended religion and piety, with no other design than to destroy the holy *Daniel*, the man greatly beloved of God, and of all good men; and so using their affection and loyalty for their king as a cloak of maliciousness.—

How carefully then ought kings, and all great men, to beware of flattery;—especially of receiving such honours as are not consistent with the honour of God, nor the good of their people! And, above all, to consider, that nothing can degrade and dishonour them more, than to be made the tools and instruments of

Here

13. *Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: then they brought these men before the king.*

14. *Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego? do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?*

15. *Now if ye be ready, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?*

Here again is a Lesson to be learned of an heathen and idolater; and he that is wise will not slight the instruction or example of an enemy*.—This great king, tho' enraged at the information, condemns not unheard; he transgresses not the rules of moral justice and equity; he gives the accused not only leave to answer for themselves, but time also, even a second trial, and further opportunity of obeying his command.—Another most useful hint we may likewise gather from hence, for our instruction and practice, that if, by the light of nature, it be judged a crime worthy of a burning fiery furnace, to refuse the worship of what it esteems to be God, although it be but the work of men's hands;—how shall we escape the far more dreadful, the far hotter and more unquenchable flames of hell, if we neglect the worship of the living and only true GOD?—On the other hand, if we compare the judgments of Almighty God, in regard to this life, with the hasty and passionate sentence of this enraged king [*Ye shall be cast the SAME HOUR, &c.*], how infinitely more patient is the great God of heaven towards men, than man generally is to man! How forbearing is the Divine justice, tho' provoked every day by the most enormous crimes, nay, by repeated

*—*Fas est & ab hoste doceri.*—Ovid.

profanations and contempts of his holy name, as well as righteous laws! and especially by refusing honour and worship to that *image*, that only true image of himself, the Lord JESUS CHRIST, which he hath set up, and commanded *all people, nations, and languages, to fall down and worship!*—Yet he still forbears, still respites the punishment, not only for *hours*, but for *days and years!*—Experience then must needs teach us how full of compassion and mercy, how long-suffering and gracious the LORD is. And can we forbear to love the Lord our God, who so loveth us!—Such men only taste not the sweetness of his mercy, who feel not their own misery: Such only are insensible of his goodness, who hate not their sins; who love not their own souls; who chuse death.—O thou preserver of men, thou lover of souls, remove this monstrous ingratitude, and cure this stupid ignorance of ourselves and thee. Did we but know thee, did we but know ourselves, we could not chuse but love thee.—O may we so know and love thee here, thou sovereign bliss of our souls, that hereafter we may know thee as thou art, and love and enjoy thee for ever! Amen.

16. *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered, and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.*

17. *If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.*

18. *But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods,*

In this answer and behaviour of the three *Hebrew* youths, we have a true specimen of that faith and that courage, which all should have, who profess to be the servants of God.—There needs indeed no comment to explain to the understanding the sense of this noble and heroic speech; but to warm the affections, and kindle a holy emulation in our hearts, we may paraphrase it thus: —“ We are not solicitous, “ O king, neither may we
“ pre-

nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. “premeditate what answer
 “to make; much less deli-

“berate of any apology or
 “defence. The crime objected we confess: The
 “penalty decreed we submit to; well knowing, that
 “the God whom we serve, is able, if he see fit, to
 “rescue us from the burning furnace. But whatever
 “the event may be, whether he please to deliver us
 “or not from these flames, *be it known unto thee, O*
 “*king, that we will not serve thy gods, &c.* We serve
 “not our Divine Master on prospect of saving this
 “perishing life, or in hopes of any temporal deli-
 “verance or interest, but on the much nobler prin-
 “ciple of love, and the desire of pleasing him.—
 “Wherefore, as we know not certainly whether our
 “life or death will be most for his glory, and most
 “agreeable to his will, we commit ourselves, with joy
 “and entire resignation, to the absolute disposal of his
 “good pleasure. For although we know assuredly,
 “that it is easier for him to save us alive in the midst
 “of a *fiery furnace*, than it is for thee, O king, to cast
 “us therein, yet it is not so certain that he will work
 “that miracle for our preservation. But being con-
 “vinced of his infinite wisdom to do always what is
 “best, we can safely rely on his will, as the ground
 “of our happiness, as well as duty.—Be then the
 “consequence what it will, our fixed resolution is
 “this, not to offend our God, by worshipping this
 “golden idol.”

Thus descants an ancient father on this pious and
 resolute answer of these three youths. And we may
 say, never did faith, courage, and humility, concur
 together with more lustre, than in this undaunted,
 yet meek, reply.—At the same time let us adore the
 goodness of God towards his people in the midst of
 judgment, and admire the gracious designs of his
 providence, in banishing them from their native
 country.—What a wonderful change is here! That
 very people, whom all the prophets, all the favours,
 all

all the threatnings, of God could not reclaim nor withhold from idolatry, while they continued in their own land, and had their temple, their priests, and the Divine oracles among them; yet, when these are taken away, and they driven into a strange land, having no guides, no bread of life, no place of worship; how ready do we find them now, to embrace death itself, in its most formidable appearance, rather than be guilty of idolatry!—And indeed this captivity had so good an effect on the *Jews*, that it cured them of that sin for ever after.—The cure of sin is always the design, and should always be the effect, of Divine correction.

19. *Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Mesbach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spake and commanded that they should beat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be beat.*

We may from hence observe the effect of all false religion, that it is ever accompanied with *fury* and rage against all that oppose it; and its zeal has always a great tincture of bitterness^f in it. Pride also, which is its constant attendant, can never bear any contradiction.—*The king was full of fury, &c.* Yea, every proud

man, be he never so mean, *beats* his furnace seven times hotter, when his will is crossed, and he thinks his person slighted.

20. *And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army, to bind Shadrach, Mesbach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.*

21. *Then these men were bound in their coats, their bosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*

^f Πικρός ζήλος.

22. *Therefore, because the kings commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Mesbach, and Abed-nego.*

23. *And these three men, Shadrach, Mesbach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound in the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*

are burnt, and nothing else. Not a hair of their head touched; not the least thing belonging to them (*their coats, their bosoms, &c.*) so much as singed with the flames.—So neither shall the virtues, and good works (for these are the garments of the saints), be damaged or tarnished by their sufferings; nor shall even the smell of fire pass on them; that is, the sweet odour of their many graces shall not be lessened or impaired, but rather be improved, by afflictions.

24. *Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.*

25. *He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the*

How impotent is the rage, how vain the malice, of persecutors! The fire they kindle to destroy the servants of God, serve only to slay themselves, and to set the martyr free. Lo here, the instruments, and probably the authors, of these three holy men's sufferings, are consumed, and the sufferers set at liberty, by the very same fire. Their bonds

are burnt, and nothing else. Not a hair of their head touched; not the least thing belonging to them (*their coats, their bosoms, &c.*) so much as singed with the flames.—So neither shall the virtues, and good works (for these are the garments of the saints), be damaged or tarnished by their sufferings; nor shall even the smell of fire pass on them; that is, the sweet odour of their many graces shall not be lessened or impaired, but rather be improved, by afflictions.

A Christian poet of the primitive times, cites this relation, as an argument against the Jews, that this fourth person was the very Son of GOD, who descended into the furnace to save these holy men; even the same that appeared in the burning bush to Moses, and the bush was not burnt; the same that afterwards said to his disciples, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world;"

fourth is like the Son of God.

and hath ever made good to his faithful servants the import of his name *Emmanuel*, which, being interpreted, is, GOD with us.—In our lives and conversations he is Man with us, to guide and direct us by his example.—In all our troubles and persecutions he is GOD with us, to save and defend us by his power.

26. *Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire.*

These three blessed confessors of God's holy religion had suffered themselves to be bound, and cast into the furnace, without the least resistance, or reproachful words; nay, when their hands and feet were set at liberty by those flames which were designed to consume them, yet used they not that liberty to *come forth*, until the same power called them

thence, which had cast them in. By this example then we may learn, that no good man thwarts, much less openly resists, the power of his lawful sovereign.—A hard Lesson this to flesh and blood, but not to grace!—God's ordinances, and good men's duty, are ever uniform, and of a piece; there never can happen any just cause for their clashing with each other.—The mere POWER of kings is of an indifferent nature, and may be, and often is, abused by them, yet without an immediate forfeiture. But their AUTHORITY is ever sacred, and of God^h, therefore cannot be withstood, without a heinous crime. By submitting to the power, the body only, or estate, can suffer; but the soul must pay for resisting it; for "they that resist, shall receive to themselves 'damnation'!"—Self-preservation is the usual pre-

† Rom. xiii. 1.

† Ibid. ver. 2.

tence for resistance; but, alas! no surer way to eternal perdition, than such a method of preservation.

27. *And the princes, governors, and captains, and the kings counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.*

Well then (may the Christian say), what matter the troubles and fiery trials of this present world? If *Jesus* be with us, if God be for us, what can harm us? Persecution may try and purify, as gold is tried in the furnace, but cannot destroy.—Yea, the believer, whose faith sees afar off^k, even beyond the grave, beholds in this miraculous scene of deliverance, a farther prospect of happiness and joy. These three blessed martyrs, who bore so noble a testimony to the true religion, before so many thousand witnesses, afford not only an example of suffering undauntedly for the cause of truth, but have set before us a sure and certain pledge, as well as type, of that glorious redemption of the body, which awaits all the children of God at the resurrection.—When the whole creation is in flames, and all this world becomes one great *fiery furnace*, the faithful servants of *Christ* shall lose nothing by that general conflagration, but their fetters and bonds. These earthly incumbrances and impediments shall then be consumed, and done away; but not a *hair of their head shall be singed*, neither their *coats changed*, nor the *smell of fire pass upon them*; that is to say, their bodies, which are the *coats* and vestments of the soul, shall be the same numerical bodies they were; they shall not be *changed*. Their *hair*, even the least particle of matter, which serves to the perfection of the human frame, shall not be *singed*, nor impaired: No, not the *smell of fire*

^k 2 Pet. i. 9.

shall pass on them ; both the sense and the marks of all former pains and sorrows shall pass away, as tho' they had never been.

28. Then *Nebuchadnezzar* spake, and said, *Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the kings word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.*

29. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dung-hill, because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort.

30. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon.

It is said of *Sampson*, that he slew more at his death, than ever he had slain in his life. But of these three *Hebrew* confessors it may be said, they saved more by their miraculous escape from death, than ever their life, or their eloquence, could have done.

—No argument of sincerity is so convincing, as a laying down of life in defence of truth ; no proof of truth so sure and certain, as a return again from death. The first is our evidence (and the strongest we can give) in defence of Divine truth : The latter is God's infallible testimony to ours.—The signal attestation given to both by this extraordinary event, at once confounded and confuted all the worshippers of the golden image, and changed the fierce king's decree for idolatry into a law for establishing the true

religion.—Thus also the death and resurrection of our blessed Redeemer, prevailed more towards the conviction of the Jew, and conversion of the world, than all his Divine discourses, or miracles, had been able to do.—This carried in it a power and evidence which none could withstand, or gain-say ;

say; it turned his very persecutors into apostles, and his crucifiers into saints and ministers of the Gospel. And of this the like miracle in our Lesson was a most significant type, by converting *Nebuchadnezzar* into a preacher of righteousness, and a defender of the faith.





The Nineteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

DANIEL, Chap. vi.

P R E F A C E.

THIS Lesson presents us with a second victory over idolatry, and a second defeat of Envy. In the person and conduct of Daniel we behold the same example of undaunted piety, as shone so eminently bright in the characters of the three other Hebrew youths.—The zeal and constancy of them all in asserting the true Faith, their meek and humble submission to the will of God, and quiet subjection to the power of the King, was the same. Their Danger and their Patience, as well as the Cause of their sufferings, and the miracle of their Deliverance, were also alike.—It was Envy had projected their ruin; but the God whom they served, though he saved not his servants from the plots, or the manner of suffering, which their enemies had contrived, yet he saved them from the effects of the mischief designed: That so, the issue of their sufferings might, at once, both prove and illustrate their virtue; and his own glory be magnified by the strangeness of their deliverance, so far beyond all that was looked for.

The example of Daniel's Fortitude has indeed the advantage of an additional lustre; as we shall have occasion

to observe, when we come to consider it in the course of our Lesson.—Nay, the King, although he suffered himself, by a flattering address, to be betrayed into a rash and impious Law, yet, in one part of his conduct, has set an Example that is worthy our imitation.—As soon as he discovered his error, he immediately endeavoured the reversal of what he had done amiss, and too precipitately decreed. But if the obligation, by which we have, at any time, bound our souls, be like the laws of the Medes and Persians, that is, of such a nature as may not be changed nor annulled, how unadvisedly soever engaged in, we have no other remedy than to repent of our Rashness and Inconsideration, but are not at liberty to break the laws we have made, or submitted to, much less the Vows or Oaths we have made to God. A Lesson this, to all that have taken public Oaths. Whatever inconveniencies we may afterwards discover in having so done, or in the Laws or Vows so made, we are not to break them, but to perform, or bear with patience, the bond wherewith we have bound ourselves. We should carefully distinguish between the sin of making a rash engagement (supposing it should appear to be so), and the sin of breaking it. We may be displeased with ourselves, as Darius was, and repent of the first; but may not lightly dispense with the necessity and obligation of performing all solemn and public Stipulations and Contracts, which we have agreed and consented to^a. “A good man promiseth to his neighbour, and disappointeth him not;” or, as it is in the last translation, “he sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not^b.”—The same may be said of all private Vows: Whatever inconvenience may attend our want of due Consideration in the making of them^c; “We may not say before the angel, it was an error^d.”

Upon the whole, we are taught by our Lesson a steady adherence to God's true Religion, and our holy covenant; together with a faithful observance of the Laws of our

^a So Sanderfon de obligat. juramenti. ^b Ps. xv. 4. ^c See Numbers xxx. 2. ^d Ecclef. v. 6.

338 *The Nineteenth SUNDAY Dan. 6.*
Country, how great soever we be. The holy DANIEL is
a pattern of the first; the king Darius of the latter.

The Nineteenth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

DANIEL, Chap. vi.

1. *IT pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;*

2. *And over these, three presidents (of whom Daniel was first) that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.*

3. *Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.*

IT is not to be doubted, but that *Darius* knew of the divine prodigy which had appeared to *Belshazzar* at his feast, with the interpretation of it by *Daniel*; and that the taking of *Babylon* by the *Medes* and *Persians*, was the completion of that prophetic interpretation.— This might give rise to that extraordinary favour, by which he had distinguished *Daniel* above all his other Princes, and advanced him to the highest station of Trust and Dignity. — To a wise King, the best recommenda-

tion of his ministers is the character of Virtue and Wisdom; a virtue approved by Experience, a wisdom consummated by Piety. This was the *excellent spirit* that was found in *Daniel*: This made him the man so greatly beloved both of God and his Prince.— And happy the King, who has the prudence to choose such a minister! Happy the People, who live under such an Administration!

* As related in the foregoing chapter.

4. *Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find none occasion nor fault: forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.*

5. *Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.*

6. *Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever.*

7. *All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.*

8. *Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.*

9. *Wherefore king Darius*

If the Morning Lesson shewed us chiefly the folly and extravagance of Pride, we have here occasion to observe the same evil spirit, but in a more secret and subtle manner, affecting the same sacrilegious end; betraying *Darius*, even one who abhorred idols, into the like impiety of accepting divine honours. We do not indeed find that he sought it himself, nor had the vanity to set up Himself as God; yet we see, that Pride, which lodges naturally in the heart of all men, was the engine, by which he was wrought upon, through the envy of others, to pass a most impious law for assuming to himself, during the space of thirty days, the sole homage of prayer and invocation, which belongs only to the Almighty. —In both Lessons we likewise see the malicious nature of Envy. For, if Pride level its chief attempt against the majesty and throne of the most High, envy is no less inveterately bent to work mischief and destruction to Man. Pride resists the honour of God; Envy the good and happiness of its Neighbour. Both are the

signed the writing, and the decree. first offsprings of Satan, both therefore are the chief and avowed enemies of God and

Man.—But, to insist somewhat more largely here on the malignity of Envy, let us observe (with an ancient Father) that nothing leads to greater mischief, and more enormous crimes, than this diabolical Vice. An example of this we have before us in these enemies of *Daniel*. His superior Merit, and the high Honours the King had conferred upon him for his wisdom and great abilities, enraged their Envy to a degree of madness. Their Pride could not bear to see him advanced above themselves: But the Innocency of his life, and the Integrity of his Conduct, maddened them most of all, because they *could find none occasion against him* for their malice to work upon. But, as *Solomon* speaks, “Who is able to stand before envy?”—Envy is a restless spirit, if it find no fault or *occasion*, it will invent one: If it discover no flaw in our conduct towards men, it will make a crime of our greatest Virtues, and turn Piety itself into a sin.—These men Envy (though nothing more sharp-sighted than envy) *could find no Occasion* of fault in *Daniel* concerning the Kingdom; they therefore take a most impious and extravagant resolution of making a god of their King, that they may make *Daniel* a Rebel.—Had this decree taken its full effect, and wholly suspended all Prayer to God for the term assigned, it must have proved as destructive to the Public, as it was malicious in the contrivance, and impious in the Enacting. For Prayer is the sole channel, through which the Blessings of Heaven are conveyed to Man. Should this communication and intercourse between God and us cease but for a day, the world could not consist; all Nature would dissolve.—But wicked men care not if all the currents of divine Mercy to mankind be stopped, so they may

but gratify their Malice.—How diabolical a spirit is this! Devils and Envious men matter not what they suffer themselves, so they may have the spiteful pleasure of seeing others suffer too. The Happiness of good men is to them the greatest of all Torments.—They are contented to be miserable, if they can but accomplish the ruin of those they hate.

10. Now when Daniel we meet with a most illustrious and instructive example of Piety and Devotion. It was his constant Custom to retire Every day, notwithstanding the vast multiplicity of business he must needs have as chief Minister of state to so great a King, and over so large an Empire. And this not only once or twice, but *three times a day*, evening and morning, and at noon, according to the usage of the holy *David*^h.—We learn also, that the manner and gesture, he used at his Devotions, was Genuflexion, or *kneeling upon his knees*.—The Form likewise and substance of his Prayers, we may perceive, was Supplication, Intercession, and Thanksgiving.—But was it not Vanity to open his Windows, when he prayed?—To take off this objection, and, at the same time prevent a dangerous delusion, which may mislead a weak Christian into Hypocrisy, and a pharisaical Ostentation of praying, so as to be seen of men, which our Lord condemnsⁱ; we are to know, that what *Daniel* did was in compliance with that prophetic Petition of *Solomon* at the Dedication of the Temple (1 Kings viii. ver. 46, &c.); That “if the *Jews* for their sins should be carried in-

“to Captivity, and there bethink themselves and re-
“pent; and there pray unto God *towards* their land

^g See Annotation at the end. ^h Ps. lv. 17. ⁱ Matt. vi. 5.

“ which he had given their fathers, *towards* the city
 “ he had chosen, and the house there built for his
 “ name; then he would hear their prayers and their
 “ supplication in Heaven, forgive their sin, and give
 “ them compassion before them who had carried them
 “ captive.”—This, therefore, being a special case, is
 not to be drawn into imitation, any further than as it
 points out to us the duty of daily intercession for the
 Church and nation to which we belong; the best
 manner of which, is that which is most conformable
 to the revealed will of God, and the prescribed rules
 of the Church. As to our private devotions, our
 Lord hath directed, that they be offered up in our
 closets, the doors being shut, and in secret^k.—Hu-
 mility is the best and safest director of our private,
 the Church rubrics of our public, worship.—But
 herein lies the most eminent, most heroic, and sub-
 lime part of *Daniel's* example (because above the
 reach of hypocrisy, though not of envy), that, not-
 withstanding the decree was signed, and that he knew
 it was particularly levelled against him, yet he neither
 intermitted his daily devotions, nor altered the least
 circumstance of his usual practice. Policy and worldly
 wisdom would, on such an occasion, have pleaded for
 shutting his *window* at least, if not changing his room
 for a more retired place, where his enemies might
 have no access to find him at his prayers. But as this
 would not only have been a plain confession of fear,
 unbecoming so great a man, but a tacit denial of his
 God, unworthy so eminent a saint, and have given the
 adversary occasion to blaspheme, and his friends to sus-
 pect his integrity; he neither omitted his duty to his
 Maker, nor used any mean artifice to conceal his reli-
 gion.—Let then the worldly-wise talk what they please
 of self-preservation, and call it, “ the great law of NA-
 “ TURE,” *Daniel* teaches us a much nobler philoso-
 phy, a truer and more exalted wisdom, “ That cou-

^k Matt. vi. 6.

“rage and perseverance in the service of GOD, is “the law of GRACE.” Yea, in the end, is the best policy and surest means of preservation: For in him was literally verified, even with regard to this world, what our Lord afterwards affirms, “Whosoever “will¹ save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever “will lose his life for my sake, shall find it^m.”—And no man, that follows this example, can possibly be an hypocrite.

11. *Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying, and making supplication before his God.*

12. *Then they came near, and spake before the king, concerning the kings decree, Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.*

13. *Then answered they, and said before the king, That Daniel which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.*

Alas! how few tread in the steps of the devout Daniel; how numerous are the followers of these his enemies!—To gratify their passions, or compass any worldly ends, they can be indefatigable; they lose no time, nor let slip any opportunity: But have no leisure for prayer, or the service of God, because they have no heart to it. The usual pretence of such persons for dispensing with public or private prayer, is hurry of business, and want of time. But this excuse is worse than the mere neglect, because they can find leisure sufficient for satisfying their lusts, and employ that time in following their pleasures; yea, the works of sin and wickedness (like these enemies of Daniel) which the good providence of God allows them for the great ends and purposes of

¹ i. e. Is willing,—ὅς ἐὰν θέλῃ.

^m Matt. xvi. 25.

religion. And, by the pious example of the holy prophet, it appears too evident to be denied, that no lawful business, or honest profession, need be any hinderance or interruption to the duties we owe to God. The great wisdom of a Christian consists in an holy art of regulating his time aright, and in such a manner, that his temporal and spiritual affairs may not interfere with, much less supersede, each other.—As we have a soul and a body, an heavenly and a worldly interest to provide for, both ought to be duly attended, so that the duties of this life may not break in upon those of the next, nor our devotions intrench on the obligations of our calling, and that state of life which the Divine Providence hath placed us in.

14. *Then the king when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun, to deliver him.*

A most useful hint to us all; that when, through inadvertance or surprize, we have been drawn into a fault, or any dangerous error, through the instigation of others, we should rather, when we discover the mistake, turn our resentment on ourselves for our weakness, or sin, in yielding to the temptation, than wreak our spleen on them; rather judge and condemn ourselves, than others; rather be *displeased with ourselves*, as *Darius* was, and labour to retrieve and amend the false step we have made, than be provoked to censure and revile those, who have led us into it.—It is certain, the peccant humour, the sin itself, is first within ourselves; for otherwise the outward temptation could never find admittance. Temptation does but solicit; it is the lust of our corrupt heart that conceives and brings forth the sinful act. *Darius* would surely have rejected, with abhorrence, the address of his council as impious and profane, had not pride lain at the door, and swallowed the bait, under the mask of flattery. But, when he saw the monstrous effect, he discerned also the cause,

cause, of his folly and sin; and, with justice, turned his anger chiefly against himself.—But alas! how rare is such self-displeasure, even among Christians!—*Darius laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver Daniel*: And dost not thou, O Holy Saviour, labour *till the going down of our sun* of life to save us from the den of the infernal lions!

15. *Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree nor statute which the king establisheth, may be changed.*

16. *Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions: now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou serveest continually, he will deliver thee.*

17. *And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.*

and admits of no repeal or submission. We are too apt to cast into the lion's den all that offend or thwart our will. And when they are there, we set to our signets, and seal down their destruction, that our enemy may never rise any more; that our wicked purpose may not be changed. How much wiser then and safer

Here we may observe four

things worthy our notice: First, What is said of the rigour of the laws of the Medes and Persians, that they never changed, i. e. the sentence pronounced was never to be reversed; no, not to spare an innocent person. This shews how much less severe the laws of God, in the administration of his justice towards man, are, than the laws of men towards each other. The divine law is so far from involving the innocent in guilt and punishment, that it spares even the guilty, if they repent: Nay, always changes its sentence, if the criminal changes his life. But man towards man is commonly inexorable; like the laws of the Medes and Persians; he altereth not; he condemns without mercy,

safer it is to trust in God than in man; and to commit our souls to him, who, in judgment, remembers mercy; who loveth man better than man loves himself. This truth of the divine philanthropy appeared plain even to an heathen: *Darius* himself, in confidence that heavenly mercy exceeded the equity of his own decree, *spake, and said unto Daniel, Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.* Secondly, Another thing, we may observe, is the care the king took, that the malice of *Daniel's* enemies should proceed no further than the laws permitted. By laying a stone on the mouth of the den, and sealing it down, he prevents those envious men from attempting to destroy, by other means, whom, he trusted, the more merciful *lions* would spareⁿ. But, Thirdly, See we herein the hand of Providence, whose goodness in saving his servant, and power in defeating the malice of his enemies, was made the more conspicuous by the very method used to prevent the prophet's escape. The stone is *sealed*, not only with the king's *signet*, but with the signet also of his lords, that so it might not be in the power of either to *change the purpose concerning Daniel.* His deliverance therefore appeared to be the sole work of God, and not of man. And, as by this accrued the greater glory to God, so it effectually established the honour and safety of his prophet.—Nor are we, Fourthly, to omit, that herein, *Daniel* was an eminent type of our Saviour's burial, his descent into hell, and resurrection. The stone on the mouth of the *den* was *sealed*; so was the stone on our Lord's sepulchre: The circumstance was the same, and plainly foreshewed his burial. *Daniel* descended among the *lions*, so our Lord went down into the lowermost parts of the earth, into the regions of death; he descended into hell, as is affirmed by our Creed;—not to suffer torment, but to conquer,

ⁿ So St. Jerome, *Qui de leonibus securus est, de hominibus pertimescit.*

and stop the roaring lion's mouth. *Daniel* was taken up alive out of the *den*; so did our Lord arise from hell and the grave, by his glorious resurrection.

18. *Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him, and his sleep went from him,*

19. *Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.*

20. *And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel, and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions.*

21. *Then said Daniel unto the king, O king live for ever.*

22. *My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions mouths that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.*

23. *Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den: so Daniel was taken*

Whether the king had a certain persuasion, or rather some doubt, concerning the prophet's deliverance, is a question more curious than useful to dispute. Leaving therefore to interpreters their differing opinions, let it suffice to observe, that, at least, here was the voice of nature, if not the assurance of faith; a kind, affectionate, and benevolent mind.—*Darius* mourned, *passed the night fasting, without music, and without sleep*, for the concern he felt for *Daniel's* safety.—However persuaded he might be, that the God, whom he served continually, was able to deliver him, he could not be so sure he was willing to do it. Hence arose his fears, and that seeming doubt [*Is thy God—able to deliver thee?*]*—*But, if his faith was weak, his love appeared the more undoubted and sincere. It was his love for *Daniel*, made him hope; it was his love that made him fear.—Such tender sentiments of affection towards a friend, and him in distress, is highly to be admired, and as highly worthy of imitation,

up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

tion, though but rare, and too uncommon, even among equals. But such love from a superior to an inferior, yea, from a prince to a servant,

a captive, a slave; a love, not a pity, but of ardour and cordial affection, is not only admirable, but above example, and which scarce any history can parallel, nor any panygyric come up to.—How great must the merit of *Daniel* be, to engage not only the favour, but the most affectionate love and friendship, of so great a king! How wise and good a king must *Darius* be to discern, and set a just value on, such merit!

But to return to the more exemplary, and therefore the most useful, part of these two great mens characters, let us consider the virtues which chiefly distinguished them, and which were the root and principle from whence their actions sprung; namely, the benevolent spirit of *Darius*, and the piety of *Daniel*.

Benevolence is indeed a natural virtue, the genuine issue of our common humanity, and here we see it in an heathen man; we read of it also in a *Samaritan* to a *Jew*; but piety is a virtue strictly and properly divine, the sole offspring of grace, and gift of Heaven; is to be found therefore in none but an holy person, a man of God.—As charity, flowing from grace, is the greatest of the three theological or divine virtues, so benevolence, founded in the pure untainted nature of man, and thence called humanity, is the chief and very perfection of all those virtues, which we call moral; and, without which, no other virtue can be true or sincere.—This our Lord set us frequent examples of, in the whole tenour of his life and behaviour, while he conversed as man among men upon earth. Even all the miracles he wrought were so many instances of his candid, generous, and benevolent spirit. It was this drew tears from his eyes at the grave of his friend *Lazarus*; which

which made the remark of the bystanders very natural and just, “Behold how he loved him!”—It was the same benign temper made *Darius* mourn and grieve for the danger, to which his beloved *Daniel* was exposed. And, in whomsoever it reigns, it is allowed by all to be a sure and certain sign of that sweet and amiable disposition, which we commonly call good-nature. But, where ever it is wanting, it is impossible to be a good Christian, or a good man. He that ceases to be humane, ceases to be a man: To throw off humanity, is to commence brute; nay, devils; and such were the enemies of *Daniel*: They were more fierce and savage, more cruel and inhuman, than the *lions*, and it was their envy (which is the very reverse and direct opposite to benevolence), that made them so.

But what was the motive, what was the cause, of so great a prince’s affection towards *Daniel*; *that Daniel*, who, in contempt, is called, *of the children of the captivity of Judah*? It was his piety.—A piety, not only adorned with all the virtues of an holy life, and distinguished, by the eminence of his station, in the most public manner; not only approved, by a steady constancy in serving his God *continually*, even every day of his life, but undauntedly adhering to him in the most imminent danger. The love of his God appeared stronger than his love of life, or the greatest worldly honours. This was the prime and most illustrious part of *Daniel*’s character: This endeared him both to God and his prince, and gained him a title above all the titles of worldly grandeur, a title conferred on him even by an angel [*vir desideriorum*], the *man greatly beloved*.—*Darius* himself styles him not *his* servant; but, what was far superior to any honours so great a monarch had to bestow, *The servant of the living G O D*.—His political abilities, his great skill, address, and fidelity, in so managing the affairs of that vast empire, that *none occasion or fault could be found in him*, even by his enemies, *concerning the kingdom*;
these

these qualifications, however extraordinary, he seems to overlook, as small and inconsiderable, in comparison of his piety towards God, his own God, the living God ; and serving him *continually*.

Hence, therefore, we may observe, that a true, regular, uniform, and sincere piety engages the love of God and man. It is a light that needs no other testimony than itself, and is therefore that light which our Lord requires us to let shine before men. Its brightness may indeed offend the evil eye, and stir up envy, but yet it stops the mouth of censure, because it can find no just occasion of error or fault. But the honest unprejudiced mind cannot forbear to admire, honour, and love the truly pious man.—True piety, which is but another word for true charity, commandeth the affections of all that behold its native beauty and excellence ; not only as it bears the amiable likeness of the Divine Nature, but as it is a loving and beneficent spirit towards men. For piety also suffereth long, and is kind ; piety envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, beaveth not itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth : Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things : —True piety never faileth.—O most admirable Perfection of the human nature ! who would not prize thee ? who would not follow thee, did they but truly know thee ?

24. *And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives ; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or*

No sentence could be more just, than to punish those false accusers in the very same manner they had contrived for destroying an innocent man. The king, who perhaps feared to oppose an unrighteous decree, which *all the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, the princes,*

ever they came at the bottom of the den. princes, the counsellors, the captains, that is, all the great officers of state had consult-

ed and agreed to, lest they should be provoked to withdraw their allegiance, while he was yet scarce warm in his throne, if he should refuse to establish it; much more if he repealed the sentence of an immutable law, and that too in favour of the man they hated and maligned; yet is he not afraid to do justice on the guilty authors of so villainous a scheme.

—*Daniel's* miraculous deliverance was a plain evidence of their crime, and appeared a sufficient warrant from Heaven for the justice and manner of their execution. He rightly judges them worthy of death, and to be devoured of *lions*, who had betrayed an innocent man to die by so cruel a death.—Nor was there room to extenuate the miracle of *Daniel's* escape, by pretending it was owing to the *lions* being satiated before with food; their ravenous seizure of these wretched criminals and their families, *or ever they came to the bottom of the den*, proved at once the protection of God over his servant, in shutting their mouths that they hurt him not, and his vengeance against his accusers, in permitting the lions to satisfy their hunger in devouring them so greedily.—It is not improbable, but that these enemies of *Daniel* had so concerted matters before-hand, that the lions should be kept from food for some time, that so their hunger might the more eagerly incite them to devour him. But, O the folly of wicked policy! O the just judgment of God! instead of the prophet, those very men, who had maliciously accused him, are made the breakfast of the hungry lions.—“ Even so” (as archbishop *Leighton*° breaks out on the reflection of this extraordinary act of divine retribution) “ let
“ thine enemies perish, O Lord, and let those,

• Sermon xi.

“that love thee, be as the sun, when he goeth forth
“in his might.”

25. *Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied unto you.*

26. *I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.*

27. *He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.*

28. *So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

Another, and much more glorious effect of *Daniel's* piety, and of his wonderful deliverance, was the honour it brought to God, and the undoubted testimony it gave both to his being, as GOD, the living and true GOD, and to his sovereign power and unity: That he alone is the supreme everlasting God, and *his Kingdom that, which shall not be destroyed, nor his Dominion have an end.* That he alone is the Saviour of men, to deliver and rescue. He alone the ruler of the world, that governs, and, at his pleasure, *worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth.*—And that he, who delivered *Daniel* from the power of the lions, is that true, that great, that only GOD.—Thus, as the holy archbishop, before-

mentioned, descants on this extraordinary history, “Man’s wrath ended in God’s praise; so that the
“closing of the lions mouths spake louder to his
“praise that stopped them, than if he had stopped
“*Daniel's* enemies in the beginning of their wicked
“design, and prevented their attempt.”—And thus it often happens, that the wrath of man doth praise thee, O God^p; and the remainder of wrath thou

doſt refrain.—God ſuffers wicked men to deſign, and, ſometimes, execute their malicious purpoſes, that he may bring a greater good thereout, even his own glory, and the good of his people.—He reſtrains the remainder of their wrath, by turning its effects on their own heads, that he may vindicate his providence, and aſſert his juſtice. The envious wrath of *Daniel's* enemies prevailed indeed for a night, but the firſt dawn of morning light brought an hymn of praiſe to *Daniel's* God.—We obſerved before how amiable true piety is, how attractive of the love and affections of men. But, O how much more noble, more honourable, are its effects, when it ſo far exalts a poor mortal, as to reflect a glory on the great King of Heaven and Earth!—*The GOD OF DANIEL!* O amazing luſtre and excellence of piety! not only to derive honour upon a true worſhipper of God, but upon God himſelf, who receives worſhip from ſuch an one as *Daniel* was. To be His GOD, to be ſerved and adored by ſo great, ſo good, ſo holy a man!—If then God vouchſafes to accept our faithful ſervice, as an honour done to him, how noble an ambition muſt it be to imitate the holy *Daniel!* So to live, ſo to excel in all acts of righteouſneſs and true holineſs, that all, ſeeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in Heaven.—*And Daniel prospered, &c.*: So ſhall every faithful ſervant of God. “Whatſoever he doth, it ſhall prosper.”—“He that honoureth God, ſhall be honoured;—always of God, and very often of men.”

¹ *Pſ. i.*

² *1 Sam. ii. 30.*

Ver. 10. *His windows being open.*] The like practice we find obſerved by *Sarah*, the daughter of *Raguel*, in *Tobit*, chap. iii. ver. 11. that ſhe prayed toward the window, or, as the Greek expreſſeth it, *πρὸς τὴν ὑψίδι*, at the window: And, we may preſume, for the ſame devout reaſon. This was the cuſtom of the *Jews* in their captivities and diſperſions. See of this more at large in *Parker's Bibliotheca Biblica*, occasional Annot. the 1ſt, in his appendix to the 2d volume.



The Twentieth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

JOEL, Chap. ii.

P R E F A C E.

THE description of a grievous famine in this and the foregoing chapter, and the prophet's earnest exhortation to repentance, makes it very probable, what expositors conjecture, that this prophecy was written during the seven years famine, which had been foretold by Elisha (2 Kings viii. 1.), and came to pass in the reign of Jehoram, the wicked son and successor of Jehoshaphat.

It is represented as one of the sorest famines that had happened in the memory of man (the oldest man alive being challenged to produce an instance of the like, chap. i. 2.) It was occasioned chiefly by prodigious swarms of locusts, caterpillars, and other insects and vermin, which, like a foreign ^a army, had invaded the country, devouring the fruits of the earth, and laying all waste wherever.

^a Probably from the Northern parts, because called the Northern army, ver. 20. And therefore (as St. Jerome notes) was the greater miracle; because such insects are naturally bred of heat, and in warm climates. And, with respect to the time of this prophecy, they might be a typical prediction and omen of the invasion by the Chaldeans, and the devastations which they committed.

they came; as it is elegantly described, ver. 3. The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness.

But as no Scripture is of any private interpretation, and, for that reason, the whole of this Lesson is so modelled and expressed by the Holy Ghost, as to be of general use and profit to the Church in all ages, as well as to suit the times for which it was at first written, we may draw from it the following instructive observations:

I. The judgments of God are truly terrible, and irresistible: The stoutest of men or nations, when in rebellion against their Maker, are not a match for the meanest insect, when armed by Divine justice against them. No human means or force can save us from his wrath, or deliver us out of his hands.—Nothing but repentance can open us a way to escape.

II. With what lively, yet tremendous, eloquence are the terrors of the Lord displayed, from the 1st to the 12th verse, to awaken our fears, and withdraw man from sin!—How solemnly are the priests, the ministers of the Lord, commanded to sound an alarm of war against the wicked! How formidable is his day of coming to battle! How dreadful the appearance of his army! How vain and insufficient all worldly helps, for shelter or defence!

III. If the sinner trust to these for refuge, and strengthen himself in his wickedness, the judgments of God shall prove a devouring fire to consume his strongest holds.—If he attempt to secure himself by flight, these, like swift horsemen, will soon overtake him.—If he flatter himself with hope, and presume to make a stand, these, like rattling chariots from an advanced ground, from the tops of the mountains, shall, with violence, rush upon him, and break his closest ranks.—If he place his confidence in wealth and power, those fenced cities and walled towns of worldly men^b, this army of God shall take the strongest munitions without a siege; shall mount

^b See Prov. x. 15.

with ease the highest walls, and shall not break their ranks.

IV. *If the obstinate sinner still refuse to capitulate, still stand in defiance, and maintain the fight, his keenest weapons shall lose their edge, and fail him. But every one of God's host shall prove victorious and invulnerable: Though they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.*

V. *If by artifice and policy (the windings and turnings, the secret and hidden retreats, of worldly wisdom) the sinner hope to conceal himself, and elude the ministers of Divine vengeance, no walls, no house, no lurking recesses, in this his city of refuge, shall be impervious to their search.—They shall run to and fro in the city, they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses, they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.*

VI. *Yea, when all his own efforts have failed him, had the sinner interest enough to engage all the powers on earth on his side, could he unite the whole world in a confederacy to assist him, those auxiliaries should yield him no manner of succour or defence; for the earth itself shall quake for fear, when the Lord's army shall appear.*

VII. *If still he remain obdurate, and even yet refuse to yield; but, when all earthly hope is gone, he then think to fly to heaven for help (this being generally the last resort of wicked men), and, by hypocritical prayers and tears, hope to avert the judgments of God, which are pointed against him; if, with the ancient idolaters, he seek to appease Divine wrath by sacrifices to the sun, the moon, and host of heaven; or, with our modern ones, pour out prayers and vows to saints and angels; his hopes of relief shall prove as vain, as his devotions are superstitious; for, instead of affording any aid to the enemy of God, the very heavens shall tremble at his presence, the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their light; there shall be neither help nor*
comfort

comfort from thence, no, not so much as the light of a star, the least glimpse of hope, to support his drooping soul.

Let all those consider these things, who still hold out against all the offers of grace; who, in the time of health and prosperity, turn a deaf ear to the repeated calls of God's Holy Spirit; who despise the riches of his mercy and goodness, which should lead them to repentance.—And may we all learn from hence, that he will not always strive with man: That he is just and holy, as well as gracious; that he is strong, as well as patient; almighty, as well as most merciful; a righteous and severe judge, as well as a tender and compassionate father:—That he has bent his bow, and made it ready, against those who provoke him every day: That he has stripes and scourges for the backs of fools; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, for those stubborn and disobedient children, whom no favours can reclaim, no indulgence work upon, no forbearance can reform, nor promises engage.—In a word, those whom neither means of grace, nor hopes of glory, can excite to their duty, or win to repentance, Justice must, and will, destroy.

Nevertheless, whom judgment has already taken hold of, and God has begun to chastise, they are not to despair; because such a scourge is not a correction only, but a call to repentance; that so iniquity may not be their ruin.

The Twentieth SUNDAY after TRINITY,

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

JOEL, Chap. ii.

*A call to repentance : The method prescribed.**A promise of mercy ; and of the Holy Spirit.*

1. **B**LOW ye the trumpet
in Zion, and sound
an alarm in my holy moun-
tain : let all the inhabitants
of the land tremble : for the
day of the LORD cometh,
for it is nigh at hand ;

2. *A day of darkness and
of gloominess, a day of clouds
and of thick darkness, as the
morning spread upon the
mountains : a great people
and a strong, there hath not
been ever the like, neither
shall be any more after it,
even to the years of many
generations.*

BY the law and institution
of trumpets (*Numb. x.*)
we there learn the several
uses of them ; namely, to
proclaim war, to call the
assembly, &c. The first
seems to be intended here ;
and the latter in the 15th
verse of this chapter.—Here
God commands the priests
and levites to *blow the
trumpet, and sound an alarm
in his holy mountain*, that all
the inhabitants of the land
might have due notice, and
timely warning, of the ap-
proaching war, which God
himself was about to wage

with them for their sins : That his army, a *great peo-
ple and a strong*, an infinite number of locusts, palmer-
worms, &c. were already upon the wing, had al-
ready invaded their borders, and the day of battle
was fixed ; *a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day
of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread
upon the mountains ;*—as dark and as terrible as that
day appeared to the camp of Israel, when God de-
scended upon Mount Sinai (*Exod. xix. 16, &c.*)
which

which made all the people, and even the mount, yea, *Moses* himself, to tremble and quake exceedingly.— Learn we hence, not only that the judgments of God are truly terrible, always at hand, and ever ready to fall upon the wicked; but withal, for our comfort, that he never strikes without a previous warning; that he never will surprize us in our sins; but, by his ministers, by the silver *trumpet* of his word, he gives fair warning of the danger, and timely notice to prepare for battle, or to sue for peace.—Revere we therefore his justice, and adore his goodness; tremble at his judgments, and embrace his mercy.—His terrors are chiefly designed to point us out the way to escape: He comes not now to destroy, but to save.

3. *A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.*

infidelity.

4. *The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses, and as horsemen, so shall they run.*

5. *Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle-array.*

As the Divine judgments are most dreadful, so are they irresistible, to all those who presume to stand out against them by a wilful impenitence; to all who dare to contend with God, and strengthen themselves in their sins by an hardened

— *As horses*, to break their ranks, if they oppose; — *To overtake them*, if they fly.

When the terrors of conscience take hold of the guilty sinner, and all his crimes stand in full view before him, like an army of *chariots on the top of a mountain*, and a *battle in array on*

6. *Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness.*

7. *They shall run like mighty men, they shall climb the wall like men of war, and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks.*

8. *Neither shall one thrust another, they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.*

9. *They shall run to and fro in the city: they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb upon the houses: they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.*

servants of Divine justice.

10. *The earth shall quake before them, the heavens shall tremble, the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.*

11. *And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word, for the day of the LORD is great, and very terrible, and who can abide it?*

a rising ground, what can be more terrifying and confounding than such a prospect! How many thousand fears to fill his soul with horror and amazement! What anguish to torture, what clamours of conscience to distract, every faculty of his mind! How vain, at that time, are all the amusements of sense! How unable the eyes, the ears, those avenues and windows of the soul, which used to let in sin like a thief, how unable are they to keep out vengeance and despair! The tongue, which had sharpened itself like a sword, and boasted mighty things, can now make no impression, nor turn away one of the least of these

In every sinner, when overtaken by Divine vengeance, is acted a prelude of the great and terrible day of the Lord:—His earth, which he delighted in, his heaven of sensual joy, his sun, and moon, and stars, all his whole world, with its perishing furniture of sensible enjoyments, shall be dissolved and come to nought.—His body, the earthly frame which allured him first to sin, shall then be compelled

pelled to feel and quake at the wrath of an incensed God. His reason, that heavenly ray, which suffered itself to be betrayed by the pleasures of sense, shall confess its guilt, and tremble. All within, and all without, shall be full of misery and woe: The whole man shall undergo a general convulsion;—no help, no hope, no comfort, no remedy,—from any thing, but a sincere repentance!

12. *Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.*

Here follows the prescription of repentance, with the proper method and regimen of it, as the only means for escaping the just judgment of God.—The heart is the seat of the affections, the main spring of the human will, which influences and gives motion to every faculty of the mind, as well as to every member of the body; so that the whole man may be truly said to be in the *heart*; and St. Peter be allowed to speak very properly, when he calls the true christian, “the hidden “man of the heart^b.”—“Give me thy heart^c,” saith God; that is, thy whole self. The true penitent therefore must begin with the *heart*, and so turn the whole stream and bent of his affections towards God; or it will avail him nothing.—Except the conversion begin there, be the outward expressions of repentance never so solemn and sorrowful, the man is still the same he was: ’Tis cowardice, ’tis slavish dread of punishment, ’tis hypocrisy, it is not repentance.—But, as the whole man consists of a body and a soul, repentance must extend to both. Both these have sinned, and both must submit to their respective penance, and the proper medicines for their cure. If the inner man endure the operations of compunction, and a wounded spirit, the outward man must not decline its appointed discipline of mortification, which

^b 1 Pet. iii. 6.

^c Prov. xxiii. 24.

God himself has here prescribed, of *fasting, weeping, and mourning*.—If either the soul or body be wanting to their proper part, there is too much reason to suspect, that *all* the heart is not yet *turned* to God; that our conversion is too partial, our repentance too deficient and imperfect, to secure a pardon.

The usual expression of great mourning among the Jews, was to *rend the garment*: And it here means the mere form and external circumstances, or acts of penitential sorrow.—This seems to be forbidden here; or, at least, dispensed withal:

13. *And rent your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.*

But it is only comparatively so; being as much as to say, *Rent not your garments* at all, in comparison of *the heart*.—The chief and essential symptom of true repentance, which God regards, is a broken and contrite heart.—The outward forms of humiliation he may dispense with, but no where absolutely rejects: But the want of inward remorse, of a troubled spirit, and a wounded conscience, he never will admit of. This is indispensably necessary, and this will certainly be accepted, tho' the other be omitted.—Or we may understand it, with respect to the rule of order, which is to be observed in the exercise of repentance; and then it is as much as to say, *Rent, first, your hearts*: Let penitence begin from within, and the ax be laid to the root of the tree; the first blow must be struck there, even at the *heart*, where sin has taken root; and then all its branches, and outward effects, will soon fall, and die away, of course.—Or if we understand it according to the rule of concomitance (and this sense seems here to be the most proper, as well as most agreeable to the Scriptural stile), it then teaches us, to rent our hearts, and not our garments only; in the same sense as that noted saying of God, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;”

“*hice*,”

“fice;” that is, not sacrifice only.—To complete a true repentance, the whole man (as we before observed) must concur: His soul, by his affections and will; his body, which is the *garment* of the soul, in outward and suitable expressions. So that we may well apply our Lord’s words to this doctrine also, “Lo, these things ought we to do (if we be truly penitent) and not to leave the other undone.”—Inward contrition is sufficient to approve the sincerity of our heart to God: External forms are as necessary to satisfy the Church. The first is effectual for pardon, the latter for example. The first proves our own conversion; the other may serve to produce repentance in others. Both therefore are best together; and consequently we may be assured, both are here required.

14. *Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meat-offering, and a drink-offering, unto the LORD your God?*

In the preceding verse the prophet assures us, that “God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil:” But here he speaks with a kind of uncertainty and suspense,—*Who knoweth if he will return and repent?* &c.—O my God, it is infallibly true, that thou, in thyself, art ever and absolutely good and gracious; ever ready to receive and pardon all returning sinners. Faith doth not, must not, doubt of this: Forgiveness of sin is one of the articles of our Creed, which we are bound to believe; and, “Thy mercy endureth for ever^d,” is the sweetest of all the songs of the sweet singer of *Israel*.—But when we look upon ourselves, and cast our eyes upon our own unworthiness, then are we forced to cry out, *Who knoweth if thou wilt return and repent* of thine anger against us? For who can say, “I have made my heart clean,

“I am pure from my sin?”—So that while we look up to God, we are full of hope; when we look on ourselves, we cannot but fear.—O gracious Lord! so palliate our fears with a sense of thy goodness, that we may not despair; so temper our faith with humility, that we may not presume.

But what is this *blessing* that he promises to *leave behind him* ? What is this *meat-offering* and *drink-offering* unto the Lord our God?—In the foregoing chapter (ver. 9.) it is mentioned as the most grievous circumstance of the famine there described, that the *meat-offering* and the *drink-offering* were cut off from the house of the Lord. Not only the food of the body, but the food of the soul, was taken away; the very means of grace, the offerings to be made for the atonement of those very sins which had provoked Almighty God, were ceased, and could no longer be furnished for the service of the temple, by reason of the extreme famine.—Sad effects of sin! which not only pulls down on our heads the just severities of Divine vengeance, but, at the same time, stops all the currents and avenues of mercy.—Yet still repentance sets all even between our God and us.—If man repent, God will repent also.—In this he is willing we should set him a rule, and prescribe him a law: He submits, nay, waits, with a longing desire, to follow our example. Repentance (I had almost said) is stronger than omnipotence; it conquers and disarms Almighty power, wrests the thunder out of his hand, and, like *Jacob* wrestling with the angel, will not let him go till he bestow a blessing.—The *blessing* here spoken of by the prophet to the *Jews* , was the blessing of the letter, the temporal blessing of *corn* and *wine* , which had been intercepted by the famine. But, to us Christians, the *blessing* , which the Lord *leaves behind him* , when he comes to meet and receive a returning penitent, is himself, in the most comfort-

able sacrament of his own most precious body and blood. This sacred memorial of his passion the blessed JESUS left *behind him*, to be the standing pledge of his mercy, and the continual food of our souls; which no famine, but one of our own making, can cut off from us. His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed; and this *meat-offering and drink-offering unto the Lord our God*, is a feast indeed, and a blessing indeed!

15. *Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly.*

16. *Gather the people: sanctify the congregation: assemble the elders: gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.*

17. *Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach; that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?*

The second use of the *trumpet in Zion*, was to assemble the congregation upon solemn occasions, to the house of God. The occasion here signified, is to solemnize a *fast*.—As their sin, and its punishment, was national, extending to all ranks and degrees of people, the repentance and humiliation was to be as extensive and general. All are summoned; none exempted: The *elders*, to bewail and chastise themselves for suffering impiety, thro' their neglect of discipline, or example, to grow to such a head: The *children*, to lament the sins and offences of their youth: The very infants and sucklings, to be kept for a while from their mothers breasts,

that so their tender and innocent voices mixing with the general cry, might the more effectually move pity and compassion in their heavenly Father:—The *bridegroom* and his *bride* are to intermit their lawful and allowed comforts, in order to atone for the abuse of former blessings, and punish themselves for every unlawful

lawful pleasure; submitting to a short divorce, “by consent, for a time, that they might give themselves to fasting and prayer.”—Above all, the *priests, the ministers of the Lord*, are called upon, to *weep between the porch and the altar*; that is, at the bottom of the temple, as penitents, standing afar off, not daring to approach to the more holy place, and here to offer up their tears, and the tears of the people, as the only proper and most propitiatory sacrifice to God on this mournful and penitential occasion.—Tears and sighs are indeed the most eloquent language of religious sorrow, the best expressions of our love to God, and our concern for sin.—“God, saith the Psalmist, hath heard the voice of my weeping.”—But when the humiliation is public, when we are called to *go forth of our chambers*, to leave our *closets*, and assemble in the congregation; our devotion must then be regulated by some outward appointed form, and join in such solemn acts and prayers as may best answer the design of the day, preserve decency and order, and, by the gravity and uniformity of our behaviour, prove, at once, our profound submission to the justice and majesty of God, and our mutual affection and sympathy for each other, as fellow-sinners, and fellow-sufferers.

Jealousy is a sure sign,
 18. *Then will the LORD* and one of the strongest
be jealous for his land, and effects of love: It is defined
pity his people. to be, “a fear of losing

“what we think a good;”
 and is either good or bad, according to the object or motive of the desire.—When it looks upon real worth in another as a rival, and as injurious to some private good, it is then mere envy, and the very rust^h of self-love, the quintessence of evil, called by our

^f 1 Cor. vii. 5.

^g Ps. vi. 8.

^h *Erugo mera, succus nigrae rubiginis.*—Hor.

Lord, an "evil eye¹," and cannot be in GOD, or in good men.—But when the good of others is the object, and true love the motive, of concern, jealousy is then a noble and generous passion, whether it suspect the fidelity, or apprehend the interest and safety, of the object beloved, to be in danger; and, in this case, can only trespass in the degree. A defect herein betrays a want of love; and jealousy in excess, is "the rage of a man²," and the injured lover's hell.—But when it is kept within due bounds, as well as excited by a just cause, it is laudable in a good man, and not unworthy of being ascribed to God. Here, and in many other places of his word, he has not disdained to declare himself a jealous God¹. As the husband of his Church, as "the lover of souls³," he is not ashamed to own himself jealous *of* and *for* his people; jealous *of* them, lest they should forsake their own mercy, by forsaking his love; jealous *for* them when in danger from enemies, lest these should triumph in their ruin, and blaspheme his power; lest they [his people] should despair of mercy, and suspect his love.—Therefore *will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.*—If our love fail not, his never will.

19. *Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen.*

20. *But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him*

If the Lord removed the plagues from *Pharaoh*, upon his bare profession of repentance, and spared the wicked *Ahab*, on an outward shew of humiliation, how much more will he save his people, when they turn to him with all their hearts, and with *fasting*, and with *weeping*, and with *mourning*; that is, with all the

¹ Matt. xx. 15.
² Wisd. xi. 26.

³ Prov. vi. 34.

¹ Isa. liv. 5, &c.

into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east-sea, and his hinder part towards the utmost sea; and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things.

signs and qualifications of true repentance (ver. 13.)—

It avails little to adjust the disputes of commentators concerning what is meant by the *Northern army*; or what, by its posture *between the east sea, and the utmost sea*. 'Tis of more use to

search out the spiritual sense and meaning.—The North, we know, is the dark quarter of the heavens, and therefore a proper emblem of the kingdom of darkness. This mystical sense the Scriptures seem to favour^a: Hence we are so often told of *evil from the North*; that the evil which was to be brought upon *Jerusalem* for their sins, “appeared from the North;” and here, the *Northern army*.—This evil, and this army from the North, that is, from the evil one, and the powers of darkness, are our declared inveterate enemies, ever ready to invade, to lead us away captive, and to destroy.—But nothing can give these our mortal enemies an advantage against us, but our sins: These deprive us of our defence, and of our strength, by depriving us of the favour and protection of God. But true repentance, and forsaking our sins, turns our captivity again, and saves us from our enemies, and from the hands of all that hate us. So that our merciful God will not only be reconciled, and admit us to pardon, but comfort us for the time wherein we have suffered adversity: He will *remove far off* from us the *Northern army*, those implacable enemies of our souls, and *restore our corn, and wine, and oil*, the benefits and advantages which, by our sins, we had forfeited and lost.

And his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things.] The more the soul hath been defiled with sin, the greater will her

^a See Jer. i. 13. and ch. vi. ver. 1, 22, &c.

abhorrence and detestation of it be, when she repents.—If (as our Lord speaks) the penitent will love much, to whom much is forgiven^o; it is as true, he will hate much also. He will love God, for the tenderness of his mercy; he will love virtue for its excellence and beauty; but he will hate the enemies of his salvation, and every sin, with every *savour* or remembrance of it, in proportion to the filth and deformity of those crimes wherewith he hath been polluted. So that the more our enemy hath triumphed over us, the more signal and complete over him shall our victory be.—*His stink and his ill savour shall come up*, like the stench of an army totally cut off, and when none are left to bury the slain: And even for this very reason, *Because he hath done great things*; For “where sin hath abounded, there shall grace abound
“much more^p.”

21. *Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things.*

22. *Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength.*

23. *Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain^q moderately,*

The earth was cursed for the sake of man; when he fell away from God, the whole creation suffered with him in the fatal effects of his sin. (See *Gen.* iii. 17. *Rom.* viii. 20.) Not only the terrestrial Paradise of *Eden* was turned into a wilderness, and made a desolation, by the expulsion of him who was placed there to cultivate and enjoy it; but the ground in general, which man after his fall, was obliged to till for his daily food, lost its natural fertility, and was

^o *Luke* vii. 47.

^p *Rom.* v. 20.

^q *The former rain,*] is that which falls in Autumn, to soften and prepare the earth for the plough, and for receiving the seed. And the *latter rain*, is what falls in the Spring season, to give the fruits of the earth growth, and bring them to maturity.

and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain, in the first month.

24. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.

25. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you.

26. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

27. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

curfed with barrenness; not only briers and thorns, or noxious and poisonous weeds covering the face thereof, but the fruits of the earth, which were to sustain the life of man and beast, were either blasted by hurtful winds, devoured by vermin, or destroyed by the intemperature of seasons, the extremes of wet or dry, too much or too little rain. These disorders in nature were, all, the consequences of the sin of man.

—The latter, of excessive drought, attended with an army of pernicious insects, was the judgment wherewith the Jews (in the present instance) had been so long, and so severely, afflicted; and which, upon their repentance, was now to be removed: So that not only the inhabitants, but the land itself, is called upon to be glad and rejoice; and the needful supplies of rain, in the

most proper seasons of Spring and Fall, are promised to be restored again.—Thus the creation sympathizes in the misery, and in the happiness, of man! it mourns for his sin, it rejoices in his conversion. So an apostle informs us, that “the creature [*κτίσις*, that is, the creation] became, thro’ the sin of man, “subject to vanity”^a;” that is to say, answered not

^a Rom. viii.

those ends for which it was made:—That it therefore “groaneth until now, earnestly waiting, and, as “it were, travelling in pain, to be delivered from the “bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of “the children of God^r,”—that so it might share in the blessed effects of our redemption from sin.—But if the very *land* rejoice in the conversion of man, and partake in the happy change; if the *beasts of the field* are to turn their tears into joy; how joyful must the Church (the *children of Zion*) be? How much more shall every soul, that is converted from the curse and bondage of sin, rejoice and triumph in her victory, and the glorious liberty she has thereby obtained thro’ him that set her free!—Even heaven itself receives an addition to its joy, on this happy occasion. The very angels rejoice, and exult with a double triumph, when the Lord *doth* this *great thing*, of bruising Satan under our feet, and reducing his strayed sheep into the fold: When he destroys the enemies power, and encreases the number of his elect. See *Luke xv. 10.*

28. *And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.*

29. *And also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those days, will I pour out my spirit.*

This prophecy is one of the clearest and most undoubted of any that foretold the establishment of the new law, being cited expressly by the Holy Ghost by the mouth of St. *Peter*, on his first address to the *Jews*, in order to prove to them that his miraculous descent upon the apostles in cloven tongues, on the day of *Pentecost*, and inspiring them with the gift of diverse languages, was the actual completion of this prophecy,

^r *Rom. viii.*

which *Joel* had written near eight hundred years before it came to pass.—Now this prophecy hath been fulfilled in the Christian Church two ways: First, by the extraordinary effects of such a general effusion of the Holy Spirit, whereby the apostles, and primitive saints, were impowered to work miracles, speak with diverse tongues, and foretel future events; and, Secondly, in the more ordinary gifts of Divine grace, by which all Christians are dedicated to God in baptism, become his temples by confirmation, and are sanctified in their lives and conversations by the gifts and fruits of the Holy Ghost. In some or other of these effects the Divine Spirit is poured out *upon all flesh*.—The extraordinary gifts seem to be intimated to us in the 28th ver. of our Lesson; and the more common and ordinary graces, in the 29th.—Nay, may we not say, that whatever virtue there is, or hath been, in the world, even among those that never heard of Christ, is the influence of the Holy Spirit, by whom alone all good gifts do come. But his extraordinary gifts are to his saints only; that is, to Christians.

30. *And I will shew wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.*

31. *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come.*

Some interpreters apply this prophecy to the times of Antichrist: Others, as St. *Jerome*, in a mystical sense, to the first coming of Christ: Others, to his second. But this last must be true; because Christ himself describes the prodigies and fearful prognosticks, which shall precede the end of the world, after the same manner (*Luke xx. 25.*)—But if, with some, we expound it in a spiritual sense of the general corruption, which shall be in the Church before the coming of Christ to judgment, we may justly apply it to these perilous times in which

which we live; and have too much reason to say, This prophecy is fulfilled this day in our ears.—So universal a depravity hath overspread the whole Church, as exceeds all the prodigies that have ever yet appeared *in the heavens or the earth*; and may well be called a *wonder*, after so clear a revelation of the will of God in the Gospel.—*Blood and fire*, *i. e.* carnal lust, and fierce passions, reign without controul among all sorts and degrees of people.—Too many even of those, who seem to be *pillars*, and should guide and give light to the people, are only *pillars of smoke*.—*The sun and the moon*, *i. e.* the great and glorious truths of Christianity are so obscured by the evil lives, and worse principles, of those who profess it, that we hardly know the true faith, or the true church. “We walk in darkness as men without light, we grope for the light at noon day as men without eyes; we know not at what we stumble.”—Yea, through the hypocrisy of some, and the open profaneness of others, the way of truth is evil spoken of: ’Tis a reproach to profess it in its purity; it is a crime to maintain it in its just latitude and verity.—The very belief in Christ, who is the true *sun*, and only light of his Church, is turned into darkness, and even made a pretence for a professed infidelity, and downright atheism. So that the poor Church, whose noted emblem is the *moon*, is *turned into blood*, into the dregs of carnality, and grown a stranger to the spiritual life, and to the truth, as it is in *Jesus*. Surely then the end of all things must needs be at hand; for we are come to that deplorable state, which our Lord spake of, as the immediate fore-runner of Judgment, “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?”

32. *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.*

Whosoever shall call, &c.]

This by St. Paul (*Rom. x. 13.*) is applied to the Gospel-times, and is cited from this prophet to prove what he had said before (*ver. 9.*), “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from

“the dead, thou shalt be saved.”—To entitle us to salvation, a bare profession of faith, our bearing the name, or even *calling on the name* of Christ, is not sufficient: It must be a faith in the *heart*, as well as in the *mouth*, that makes the true Christian; for so the apostle adds, “With the *heart* man believeth unto “righteousness” (*i. e.* so as to obtain forgiveness of sins), “and with the *mouth* confession is made unto “salvation;” *i. e.* so as to be saved thereby.—True religion, or the saving faith which bringeth salvation, must be both external and internal; a truth in the inward parts, as well as wisdom in word, and outward expressions.—This invocation on the Lord, mentioned by the prophet, and applied by the apostle to *Jesus Christ*, as it plainly proves JESUS to be the LORD JEHOVAH, and that he is to be invoked as the proper object of prayer, and obediential faith; so it signifies to us likewise the instituted means, by which we are admitted into his holy covenant:—First, Hearing, when the Lord doth call: Secondly, Believing what he hath said: Thirdly, Prayer, calling on the name of the Lord, even the Lord Jesus.—They who do these things, and they only, *shall be delivered.* These are called a *remnant*; a residue, left, as it were, and separated from the corrupted mass or bulk of mankind; in comparison of the rest of the world, few indeed, small in number,

ber, and but a little flock; but, as St. *Peter* speaks, "Elect, precious." According also to that other saying, "The gleanings of the grapes of *Ephraim* is better than the vintage of *Abiezer*." Or, as our Lord himself saith in the Gospel for this very Sunday, "Many are called, but few are chosen."

¹ *Judg.* viii. 2.

² *Matt.* xxii. 14.





The Twentieth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

MICAH, Chap. vi.

God expostulates with his Church for their ingratitude, ignorance, injustice, and idolatry.

1. **H**EAR now what
the LORD saith,
*Arise, contend thou before
the mountains, and let the
hills hear thy voice.*

THE better to under-
stand this Lesson, it
is necessary to read the pre-
ceding chapter, where the
birth, kingdom, and con-
quest of Christ over the ene-
mies of his Church are foretold.—Here a commission
is given him to preach to, and judge his people. Ac-
cordingly, he opens and declares his commission in
these words: *Hear ye now what the LORD saith,
Arise, &c.* As if he should say, “ I the Son of God,
“ whom the Father hath appointed to be the Saviour
“ and judge of the world, do now, by my prophet,
“ publish the contents of that commission, which,
“ hereafter, in the fulness of time, I shall execute in
“ person; first, by myself, to the lost sheep of the
“ house of *Israel*; and afterwards, by my apostles and
“ ministers, to all the world. And I tell it you
“ now beforehand, by my prophet, that when it is
“ come to pass, you may believe that I am he.—

My

"My commission from the Father is this, *Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills bear thy voice, &c.*"—Where note, by these *mountains and hills* (according to the prophetic style) are meant the rulers and governors of the people, the men of eminence and power.

2. *Hear ye, O mountains, the LORDs controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.*

Accordingly he proceeds;

Hear ye, O mountains, &c.

that is to say, "By virtue of

"that commission, and the

"mediatorial office where-

"with the Father hath in-

"vested me, I summon first

"my own people the *Jewish*

"nation, and their rulers,

"to hear the divine message; to receive the Gospel;

"and to repent;—*for the Lord hath a controversy with*

"*his people, &c.*; not only with the heathen, but

"with his own people; for the very Church and

"People of God have forsaken him; all are gone

"out of the way; there is none good, even of them;

"no not one.—I call therefore upon all to repent.—

"Repentance is the first act of conversion to God,

"and is therefore the first word of the Gospel," [Re-

pent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand]. "But

"the first act of repentance is humility; therefore I

"address myself to the *mountains and hills*, the high

"and lofty ones, either in power, or conceit; that

"all such mountains and hills should be brought

"low, the crooked be made straight, and the rough

"ways smooth, to prepare the way for my coming,

"and to make my paths straight."—Thus we see

the first opening of Christ's commission, is to con-

vince us of sin: This was the tenour of his fore-

runner the Baptist's charge, who was sent before him

to preach repentance to God's own people the *Jews*:

This the first article of his apostle's mission to the

world, "That all men every-where should repent."

^a *Acts* xvii. 30.

3. *O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.* O condescension! O goodness ineffable and divine! Which shall we most admire?—The judge of all

the earth comes armed with majesty and power, to contend with the mountains and hills, the great and mighty ones of the earth: He hath prepared his seat for judgment; and shall not the mountains and the strong foundations of the earth tremble before him? Yet, behold; what is the issue of this solemn contention with his people, but a controversy of love, a challenge of affections?—A mild question, whose kindness had been greatest, theirs or his?—He lays by his thunder, his majesty, his terrors; resigns his very judicial authority^b for a time (the time of his first coming), and offers himself to be tried before them: He is content to take the place of defendant, to stand at their bar, and make them his judges and his witnesses! *O my people, what have I done, &c.? Testify against me.*

4. *For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants, and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.*

Stand by, O my soul, as one of the audience at this amazing trial.—The question is, which had most reason to grow weary of the alliance, and to change, they their God, or he his people? They had often changed him for other gods, as tired of his service, and weary of his love. And afterwards rejected him, when he came in person. But what cause could they have for such change, or such a rejection?—The meek and humble Saviour, in defence of his title to their love and obedience, pleads his cause before them; not from the topics of his Almighty power, fearful judgments, and eternal vengeance, but those of kindness on his part, and a debt of grati-

^b See *John* iii. 17.

tude on theirs.—Nay, he declines, not only all menaces of future punishment, but the very mention of those severities, which their frequent rebellions in the wilderness had extorted from him. He declines even every harsh expression of reproach for their ingratitude and apostasy: The severest term his mild expostulation gives them, is *O my people*.—Canst thou hear this, O my soul, and not sink down into a profound abasement and confusion, for thy own ingratitude towards so gracious a Redeemer; for thy frequent revoltings from so merciful—a God? Canst thou see this tenderness towards such rebels as those *Jews* were, and as thou thyself hast been, and not melt into the warmest resentments of love and duty?—No obedience is so grateful to him, and no eloquence should be so persuasive to us, as love.

Note; by *Moses*, and *Aaron*, and *Miriam*, are represented to us the three great blessings (even the greatest we can enjoy upon earth); to wit, civil government, a regular clergy, and an orthodox well-constituted Church. And what people ever enjoyed these blessings in an happier degree, than we of this nation; yet how few prize them as they ought! Yea, how many not only slight, but professedly reject, these inestimable benefits, and wilfully forsake their own mercy!

5. *O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.*

Another instance of mercy to his antient people, without which the first had been of no avail, was, preventing the curse which *Balak* attempted to bring upon them.—To redeem them out of *Egypt*; and lead them through the *Red Sea* into a wilderness, had been no mercy, had that curse been suffered to take effect, and barred their entrance into the land of *Canaan*. But, by the gracious intervention of their great Redeemer, that

that curse was converted into a blessing.—The gates of hell gave way, and then the streams of *Jordan* were driven back, to open a path for his ransomed to pass over into the land of their inheritance, the promised land.

But if *Egypt* and the *Red Sea* was the scene of their first deliverance; between *Shittim* and *Gilgal* it was, (even the last stage of their travels in the wilderness) where the more illustrious theatre of this second and far greater mercy lay.—And what is all this, O my soul, but the type of thy own redemption, first from sin, and then from death and hell?—Baptism has brought thee up out of the land of *Egypt*, has set thee at liberty from the slavery of sin; but as yet thou art in the wilderness, perhaps on the borders of thine inheritance, and in thy last stage, nearer than thou thinkest for, or, it may be, desirest: Yet remember thou hast a bitter and implacable enemy, consulting how to blast thee with a curse; and waiting at thy last stage to defeat thee of thy blessing. But let not thy courage fail; though death should be made more terrible than it is in itself, by the combination of all the powers of hell to bring a curse upon thee; he that delivered *Jacob* from the curse, he that hath since been made a curse for thee, will turn their malice into blessings:—He will save thee.

This is the voice of an humble and true penitent, when melted into compunction for his guilt, by the foregoing most loving expostulations of his gracious Redeemer: It is what every sinner ought to say, what every one will say, when he feels a tender remorse for his sin and ingratitude. Love softens the heart, and Fear alarms.—

6. *Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old?*

7. *Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my*

Even

transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Even Satan could say, "skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life^c."—When either

an unfeigned repentance has awakened the soul to see her danger, and sets before it the terrors of the Lord; or when death stares the sinner in the face, and opens a prospect into an eternity of misery and woe, what self-upbraidings, yea, what anguish, yea, what horror, will then seize and distract the guilty mind! or, as St. Paul phrases it, "What indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge^d," will not conscience express for the errors and follies of a life mis-spent in sin! How will it lament and detest its past crimes! how will the sinner abhor both sin and himself! What would he not give to be reconciled to the *high God*? What will he not offer in exchange for his soul!—Not only *thousands of rams*, or *ten thousands of rivers of oyl*, as an atonement to his offended judge, but his *first-born*, as a sacrifice for his *transgression*, the very *fruit of his body* (as *Abraham* did) for the *sin of his soul*; even all the world, nay, ten thousand worlds, if he had them, to purchase a reprieve from the just punishment of his crimes; from hell and damnation.—But, alas, none of these, nor all these together, are sufficient to propitiate and satisfy the wrath of divine and infinite justice; or even to discharge the smallest article of our trespass and debt; for it "cost more to redeem our souls, so that we must let that alone for ever^e."—None but Christ can satisfy for sin; neither could he, were not his merits, and the price of his sufferings, equal to the infinite justice of our offended God; that is, if he were not truly God, as well as truly man;—as man, to suffer; as God, to satisfy.

^c Job ii. 4.^d 2 Cor. vii.^e Psalm xlix.

8. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

Here the Saviour, by his prophet, returns an answer to the penitent's question:—*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, &c.*—God indeed hath *shewed* every man, (for Christ lighteth every man that cometh into the

world^f, *what is good*. Though all have not the book of the law, the written oracles of God, yet have they all the divine law of conscience inscribed on the fleshy tables of the heart: So that all are without excuse, who choose not the *good*, which God hath *shewed* them.—But, alas! Sin hath so blotted and obscured the characters of natural religion, that either they see not what the Lord *requires* of them; or, neglecting to look into their hearts, they will not see the law there written, nor attend to the dictates of their own conscience. Hence it comes to pass, that when the sinner is roused into a sense of his guilt and danger, he often mistakes both the law and his judge. He runs to the creatures instead of the Creator; and to those things of the world more especially, which he had set the greatest value on; his goods, his riches, yea, his children, as the fittest sacrifices to atone for the sin of his soul.—But these God rejects, and sends us back to the principles of natural religion, which he had engraven on our consciences, as the first necessary step towards his favour, and the forgiveness of our sins: There he bids us look and see what that good and reasonable service is, which he *requires*.—And what doth the LORD now, even the Lord JESUS CHRIST, require of us Christians, but the very same thing?—The law and the gospel differ not in their ultimate end: The design of both is to shew man *what is good*, even the chief

^f John i. 9.

good², and to bring us to it: For this reason the great lawgiver hath given the law twice to all mankind, even as he did to the *Israelites* at *Horeb*.—After that the first tables, delivered to *Moses*, were broken, he condescended to write, with his own hand, a second edition of his law. So, when the law of nature was violated and destroyed by *Adam*, it was again published and renewed by Christ; but with this happy amendment, that it became a law of grace, through faith in him.—This order the apostle also intimates to us in those words, “Testifying both to the *Jews*” and also to the *Greeks* (*i. e.* the *Gentiles*) repentance “towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ^h.” Our Lord teaches us the very same thing, where he saith, “No man cometh unto me, “except the Father draw himⁱ.” That is, no man is capable of being a Christian, or true disciple of Christ, except he first obey the voice of conscience, and follows the dictates of moral good, which God hath written there. If we have broken the law of conscience, (as who hath not?) we must first repent, before we can savingly believe: And if we truly repent of what we know is wrong, we shall then, with readiness of mind, believe what is true.—A thorough knowledge of ourselves will shew us what poor, blind, naked creatures we are, and drive us to seek unto God for relief; and when with the eye of faith we discern the greatness and goodness of God, we cannot but endeavour to *do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with him*.

We have heard the answer of the divine oracle to
 9. *The LORDs voice* crieth unto the city, and a particular penitent, to any
 the man of wisdom shall see private or single person who

² The *summum bonum*, or chief felicity of man, which heathen philosophy talked so much of: But none but Christ was able to shew, and even put us in possession of.

^h *Acts* xx. 21.

ⁱ *John* vi. 44.

is

thy name; bear ye the rod, is conscious of his sins, and
and who hath appointed it. solicitous for pardon.—

Wherewith shall I come, &c.

*saith the sinner under the terrors of conscience; he
 hath shewed thee, O man, &c.* is the answer. But
 here, the answer is more general, and directed *to the
 city*, or whole nation; to shew what kind of repent-
 ance is required for epidemical and national sins,
 when public judgments have taken hold of the city
 or kingdom for public and notorious crimes.—

First, There ought to be *wisdom* to *see* and acknow-
 ledge the hand of God, in inflicting the punishment.

—Secondly, To *bear the rod*, and understand the
 cause, as well as feel the smart, of the divine scourge.

—Thirdly, To consider the justice of him that *hath
 appointed it.* The consideration, that it is the Lord
 who corrects, will work in us that humble fear,
 which is the beginning of wisdom. The *bearing* his
rod (for his rod is a speaking rod, and always points
 to the cause of his anger) will bring us to confes-
 sion. And while we are thus musing and revolving
 in our thoughts, who it is, as well as why he chastises,
 the fire will kindle, and warm our hearts with faith
 and hope in his mercy, as well as make us to revere
 his justice; will move us to love, as well as to fear,
 him.—And herein consists the substance and whole
 efficacy of repentance.—This is that repentance which
 is not to be repented of.

10. *Are there yet the
 treasures of wickedness in
 the house of the wicked, and
 the scant measure that is
 abominable?*

11. *Shall I count them
 pure with the wicked ba-
 lances, and with the bag of
 deceitful weights?*

12. *For the rich men*

From hence to the end,
 is a detail of the then
 reigning sins among the
Jews; more particularly the
 ten tribes, or kingdom of
Israel, who had separated
 themselves by an avowed
 schism from the unity of
 the Church. He taxes them
 with covetousness, base dis-
 honesty, falshood and deceit,
 injustice

thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

13. *Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.*

14. *Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied, and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee, and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver: and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.*

15. *Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap: thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oyl; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.*

16. *For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels, that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.*

injustice and oppression in their commerce and dealings with men; and as notorious a falshood towards God, by profaneness and irreligion; keeping rather the impious and idolatrous statutes of Omri and Ahab, than the divine law delivered by Moses; a law not only holy, just, and good, in itself; but, in its consequences, most effective of their temporal happiness, if observed; and as sure to bring down judgments, if infringed: A law which their fathers had, by covenant, bound themselves to keep, under the most solemn sanctions of blessings and cursings, according to their observance, or non-observance, thereof. For this reason, after enumerating their notorious crimes in violation of both tables of the law, and the general corruption both in Church and State, God is pleased to add; *that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing; to shew them the necessary con-*

sequence of such national sins. That such effects were indeed unavoidable; but the cause thereof was altogether in themselves. That the punishment they suffered, was rather their own act, than the infliction of divine wrath. They drew it down on their own heads, and, as it were, compelled God to be severe,

contrary to his own inclination.—Hence we see the same divine benignity, which we had occasion to celebrate in the beginning of our Lesson, extends even to the most enormous offenders. God wills even *their* happiness, and “would (as an apostle also assures “us) have all men to be saved¹.”—Hence he shews a regret to acts of justice, as to a “strange work^m,” a thing he is constrained to, more by our sins, than by his own nature.—We see also, that public vices are far from being benefits to a nation;—that, in fact, they are real mischiefs; that destruction and unhappiness are in all the ways of sin, and that a wilful living therein is a wilful choice of misery. So that it is most truly said, “Thy destruction is of thyself, “O Israelⁿ.” And again, “All they that hate “wisdom, love death^o.”—Sin turns our very blessings into a curse.—He that lives without God, lives without comfort in his own breast, or enjoyment in any temporal good.—His *casting down* is *in the midst* of him: His heart and conscience continually upbraid and terrify him, whenever he turns in his thoughts on himself, and reflects.—He *shall eat, but not be satisfied*; he may *sow*, but shall not *reap*. Vanity, vexation, and disappointment, shall be the usual issue of his fairest expectations.—And if these be benefits, fit it is that they should enjoy such effects, who hug and applaud the cause.—But as there can be no greater mark of folly, than to place happiness in what is real misery, and that, consequently, not only ruin, but shame and contempt, must be the final issue of so absurd a choice, it is therefore added (as the conclusion of this heavy charge against all ungodly and vicious great men, whose wicked examples had brought religion into contempt, and cast a *reproach* upon the Church and people of God) *Ye shall bear the reproach of my people*. That very reproach

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 4.
^o Prov. viii. 36.

^m Isaiah xxviii. 21.

ⁿ Hos. xiii.

and contempt which, by unbelievers, is thrown on the servants of God, does often, in this world, but shall most certainly in the next, light on the heads of those, whose ill lives, and bad examples, bring disgrace upon piety and true religion.—“Mighty men shall be mightily tormented ^p.” And the more honour and dignity, authority or power, they possessed in life, the more infamy and shame, wretchedness and misery, shall they be loaded with hereafter:

^p *Wisd.* vi. 6.





The Twenty-first Sunday after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

HABAKKUK, Chap. ii.

P R E F A C E.

THE prophet, under the character of a watchman, or centinel, represents the duty of the ministers [of God, and of all who have the cure of souls; that they be diligent to learn, and faithful to report, the will of God; more especially (as it is the peculiar office of a watchman to give timely notice of any danger), that they warn those, whom they are set to watch over, of the danger and deadly nature of sin; particularly, of

*Pride, ambition, and vanity;
Covetousness, and the love of money;
Injustice; oppression, and cruelty;
Drunkenness, and excess;
Idolatry, or the inordinate love of the creature;
and, in general, to recommend watchfulness, and a lively faith in God.*

If we consider the Lesson in a more immediate Christian sense, we shall find couched herein the threefold engagement which we made in baptism, of repentance, faith, and obedience.—The nature and necessity of repentance is set forth

forth by an enumeration of such sins as are plainly reducible to their known respective heads, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil; with the woe or penalty annexed to each; On the contrary, obedience, which is the true justice, is encouraged by the promise of life:—The Just shall live. But then it is as plainly intimated, that justice, or moral righteousness, without faith, is impracticable:—The Just shall live by his FAITH. He shall indeed live, but not by his justice, or works, but by his Faith. Faith is the instrument, by which is conveyed the spiritual life; but works intitle to the reward. Here then we see the Gospel veiled under the Law; and may observe, that the terms of salvation are the same under both dispensations; because the covenant of grace, or second covenant, whereby alone mankind can be saved, is the same both to the Jew and to the Gentile. In virtue hereof, both Jew and Christian are equally bound to believe, and to obey; both faith and obedience are indispensable conditions of God's favour and acceptance. But the right order is, that faith go first, and works follow: In the nature of things the agent must be prior to the act. If faith be true, it first gives life, and then worketh; if it worketh not, it is no living and true faith. Faith indeed justifieth without works, and maketh alive: But tho' works without faith is dead, and cannot justify, faith without works is also dead, and cannot save. The conjunction of both is the only reasonable ground of our Christian assurance.

The Lesson may also be considered as a vindication of the wisdom and justice of God in the government of the world; particularly in that seeming inequality of his providence towards good and bad men in this life, which has so often staggered the reason, and sometimes the faith, of many pious persons. We are here taught, that the certain consequence of all vice and wickedness is shame and misery. Woe, or punishment, is the constant attendant on every sin: How slow soever its pace may be, it never fails to overtake it; so that however evil men may happen to flourish, it is but for a time. "The very prosperity

390 *The Twenty-first SUNDAY* Hab. 2.

“ of fools shall destroy them ^a.” Their very success in sin shall prove their destruction. This consideration must therefore compel us to conclude, that such persons are so far from being happy in their most prosperous state, and so far beneath our envy or applause, that they justly merit our pity and compassion, as of all men the most miserable.

The Twenty-first SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

H A B. Chap. ii.

1. *I* Will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

WE are all soldiers of Christ, and all commanded to *watch*: Some as officers, for the safety of others; some as centinels, posted on their guard; but all are bound to *watch* for the mutual defence of all.

—The *tower* may well signify the Church, that impregnable fortress, against which the enemy shall never prevail,—except we betray it by our own treachery, or neglect. And, as the faithful soldier is vigilant, and always on his guard against the approach of danger, so is he ever ready to receive and obey his commanders orders; he *will watch, to see what he will say*;—not only to hear, but to *see*; i. e. will watch with his eyes open.—The seeming impropriety of the expression carries an important meaning. The like may be observed in the words, *What he will say* IN ME ^b (for so both the *Hebrew* and the *Greek* express it). This is not according to the

^a Prov. i. 32.

^b See parallel expression, 2 *Esdras*, chap. x. 34.

language of the world, but most proper in the spiritual and heavenly stile; most audible and expressive to a prophet's, to a Christian's ear; because God, with whom he converses, speaks not by an external, but by an internal, voice, and to the inner man. So *David*, "I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me; for he shall speak peace to his people, and to his saints, that they turn not again^c." And this he surely doth by his Spirit: And, as his speech is wholly internal and intellectual, so must likewise the answer be that we make; not of the tongue, but chiefly of the heart. For so the Psalmist again, "He hath prepared their heart, and his ear^d hearkneth thereto."

By the *tower* may also be understood faith; to which we may properly compare it, not only by reason of its strength and security, but for the advantage it affords the sight. For as a *tower* is placed on an eminence, commonly on a rock, and raised above the level of earth, to assist the prospect, and take in the most distant view, so faith first strengthens, then elevates, our reason above the things of earth, even to "see afar off^e," to discern things that are spiritual, and take a clearer view of the ways and works of God, which are far above the reach and ken of the naked eye of carnal understanding.——From such a *tower* it was that the holy Psalmist took his observation, when he said, "I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I the end of these men^f."——Thus the prophet here, and thus all good men, when they find themselves under doubts and difficulties of any kind, they trust not to the feeble assistance of their own short-sighted understanding, but have an immediate recourse to faith; they set themselves *upon their tower*; thence take they a view of the coast, look round about to observe the best and safest way, consult the word and will of God, attend

^c *Pf.* lxxxv.^d *Pf.* x.^e *2 Pet.* i. 9.^f *Pf.* lxxiii.

to the motion of his Holy Spirit, as the mariner doth to his star, or his compass, and faith in his heart, *I will watch to see what he will say unto me* [or rather, *in me*, as before], *and what I shall answer when I am reproved.*—In the foregoing chapter the prophet had expostulated with God on the course of his providence, concerning the wickedness, and yet impunity, of evil men; their oppression of the righteous, and yet prosperity,——“Wherefore holdest thou thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? &c.” This seeming inequality of Divine providence towards good and bad men, has often puzzled not only the heathen world, but even the people, yea, the prophets, of God; witness *Job*, *David*, *Jeremiah*, and others. But then, if we be so startled as they were, at such a procedure of the Divine wisdom, let us also follow their example, in betaking ourselves to GOD himself for the solution of this difficulty; and here, with our prophet, *see what he will say, and what we shall answer.* It is not to the philosophers, or wise men of the world; it is not to the maxims of human wisdom, nor our own judgment and notions; much less to the probabilities and appearances of things, or corrupt dictates of popular opinions; that we are to seek for a decision of this perplexing case, but to the oracle of GOD, and rule of faith. We are not to desert our station, but *stand upon our watch*; to watch and pray, and diligently attend what answer God himself, who best knows the reasons of his own ways, shall give.—And what better or more satisfactory answer can possibly be given to this question, than what God hath here given us in the sequel of our Lesson; namely, “That whatever outward prosperity the wicked man enjoys, that very prosperity is his bane and his punishment: For no greater judgment can befall any man in this world, than to be suffered to prosper in his wickedness.”—In this answer of God, we may observe how every kind of sinner is produced

produced under the general and noted division, 1st, Of men devoted to the pomps and vanities of the world [namely, the proud and the covetous, ver. 4. & 9.]: 2dly, Men given to the sinful lusts of the flesh [to wit, the drunkard and intemperate, ver. 15.]: 3dly, Those who do the works of the devil [namely, the murderer and idolater, ver. 12, 18.]. And can any of all these be counted happy? Nay, which of them is not punished by the very sins they commit, and cursed, even by their success in wickedness? Every crime hath its proper *woe* annexed; every act of sin hath an addition to their misery, as well as to their guilt².

2. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

If we consult God in any streight, he will not fail to answer: "Ask and ye shall have; seek and ye shall find, &c." Observe we also the great goodness of God in providing the ne-

cessary means of instruction for his people in all generations, by causing his word to be written,—*Write the vision.*—In the word written we are to look for comfort and instruction. There we shall find answers to all questions that concern our true happiness: There shall we be furnished with arms for every temptation; with food for our health, and medicines for the distempers of our souls; with daily supplies of grace to strengthen our faith, confirm our hope, and increase our charity.

That he may run that readeth it.] How different is this expression from what is usual! It is not said, He that runs may read, but, *He may run that readeth.* Which methinks denotes not only the legibleness and

² See this subject largely and finely handled by *Boetius de consol. philos.* lib. iv. prop. 6. Even *Tully*, by the light of nature, could say, *Ita prorsus existimo, bonos beatos, improbos miseros*, i. e. "This is my firm opinion, that good men are happy, and bad men miserable." *Tusc. Q.* lib. 5.

great plainness of God's word, but that the reading of it is no hindrance to our Christian race: It does not stop our course to read and study the Scriptures, as the study of other books may; but rather assists and sets us forward on our way to heaven.—“I will run
“ the way of thy commandments (saith *David*), when
“ thou hast set my heart at liberty ^h.”

The answer here given, is not only to the then present case, which the prophet had proposed, but refers expressly to a future time; indeed to all times, when the like difficulty should arise; but more especially to an appointed time, a time which was to come, even the times of the Gospel, when such dispensations of Providence should be more clearly unveiled, and Wisdom justified of all her children: But above all, at the great day of final retribution, when the whole scene and series of Divine Providence shall be opened and unfolded. For then its admirable wisdom, exact œconomy, and unerring justice, shall be displayed before the whole world, to the infinite delight of his faithful servants, and the utter confusion and eternal silence of all gainsayers and unbelievers. Then it will *spe*ak to all, without the least intricacy or error. Wherefore, *though it tarry*, and seem to delay longer than good men hope, bad men fear, or some believe, whose bold impatience, or rather infidelity, dares question the promise of his coming; it is our duty to *wait for it*, with an humble assurance, that *it will not tarry*—beyond the time appointed; when the fulness of time, even God's time, is come. 'Till then possess we our souls in patience, and *wait for the Lord*.

4. Behold his soul, which is *lifted up*, is *not upright* in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

By the *soul lifted up*, and *not upright*, is represented the degenerate state of man, and that perverse and crooked nature, which he contracted by his fall, and was first occasioned by pride. He was then *lifted up* to a vain ambition of being like unto God, and ever since is too apt to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. He is still *lifted up*, but *not upright*.—Observe here a seeming contradiction in the terms, *lifted up*, yet *not upright*. Howbeit this is the true character of pride. This vice, in its nature, is the greatest absurdity, and merest contradiction; for tho' *lifted up* to an imaginary height above all other men, and even to rival God; yet it is still terminated only on Self, the most unworthy object in the whole creation. So that, in fact, the proud man's soul is bowed downwards, instead of being erect and *upright*, as God made it; his exaltation is only in his own conceit, and a mere delusion; his casting down is real. So that in every proud man is acted the scene of *Lucifer's* fall from heaven; while he attempts to soar above the throne of God; he is thrown down to hell.—*But the just shall live by his faith*; i. e. those who are entered into covenant with God; and justified, or made *just*, in the sight of God, by repentance and faith, *shall live*;—they shall *live* unto God by the spiritual life here, and with him in life everlasting hereafter. Or if we take the character of *just* in a more restrained sense, for one that performs the strictest obedience, and keeps the whole law, even he shall *live* (that is, shall be finally saved), not by his justice, or good works, but *by his faith*.—This is the known doctrine of St. Paul:—Yet not by faith, without good works:—This is the distinguishing doctrine of St. James: The harmony and conjunction of both these truths, is the doctrine of the Gospel; and, consequently, of both apostles.

As

5. *Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people?*

As wine and strong drink intoxicate the brain, so pride inebriates the mind. It enrages the passions, inflames the desire to a degree as insatiable as *hell*, as greedy and destructive as *death*.—Again, the proud man hates to *keep at home*: That empire, which God hath assigned him within, in his own breast, over his own heart and affections, that estate, which Providence has allotted him for his portion, is thought too narrow a sphere for his ambition to move in. His vain-glory pushes him on to invade the rights and peace of others, and to usurp a dominion over all.—As every cup increases the drunkard's thirst, so the thirst of ambition is enlarged by being gratified. No new acquisitions can satisfy pride: The world itself is too little to content its desires. Every proud man is a *Nebuchadnezzar*, an *Alexander*, a *Cæsar*, in affecting a superiority over others. *He gathereth unto him all nations*, in his own mind; and *heapeth unto him all people*, in his own ambitious desires of dominion.—From this boundless and insatiable vice, good Lord deliver us!

6. *Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his: how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay.*

Nothing is equal to the exorbitance of pride, but its folly. It ever misses of its own aim; courts honour, yet flies from it; flies from contempt, yet runs into it: “For when pride cometh, then cometh shame¹.”—And as nothing is more foolish, so nothing can be more unhappy, than pride; it always defeats its own

¹ Prov. xi. 2.

designs: While it seeks the praise of men more than the praise of God, all it gains by so preposterous a course, is reproach, and a *taunting proverb*, from the one, and a *woe* from the other.—The proud man is a robber; praise belongs not to him; to grasp at it is *increasing what is not his*. And what are all the advantages that pride aspires after, but *thick clay*? both a load, and a defilement.

7. *Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?* This prophecy (some think) was primarily and immediately addressed to the king of *Babylon*, whose downfall (whether we refer it to *Nebuchadnezzar* or *Belshazzar*)

8. *Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee: because of mens blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.* was as sudden and ignominious, as his pride and ambition was vast and unbounded.—But pride, in every heart, is the same in its nature, and in its effects. Its desires are as extravagant, and its ruin as sure. It

would carry the beggar to as great lengths of vain-glory as the mightiest prince upon earth, were its power equal to the haughtiness of its spirit. To be like the Most High, yea, to be above both God and man, is the ambition of every soul that is possessed with this monstrous vice: No wonder that God and man are the sworn enemies of pride. God abhors and resists it, for its innate turpitude, and sacrilegious impiety: Every man detests and withstands it, for its arrogance, and injurious incroachments.—How then can pride escape a fall, when God and all the world conspire its destruction? *Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee?* So true, and so just, is that remark of the Wise man, “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall^k.”

^k Prov. xvi. 18.

9. *Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his own house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil.*

The next vice that carries a shew of happiness, is the love of riches, and amassing of worldly wealth. This the covetous man places his sole felicity in: And his sumptuous buildings, pomp-

ous equipage, and magnificent appearance, may draw the eyes and envy of the unthinking croud. He may seem to have placed his *nest on a rock*, above the reach of danger, and *the power of evil*.—But what saith God? what saith Truth itself?—*Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, &c.* All this affluence, and dazzling splendor of an overgrown abundance, is, in reality, an *evil*, that deserves the rich man's fears, and the poor man's pity.

10. *Thou hast consulted shame to thy house, by cutting off many people; and hast sinned against thy soul.*

The covetous man, as he spares no pains, so he sticks at no wrong, to aggrandize himself, and heap up wealth. But what will be the end of all that cunning and address, which the world admires, and he himself applauds, but shame and perdition?

11. *For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.*

12. *Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity.*

The very *stones and timbers* of his proud palaces shall proclaim his infamy and injustice; and his soul shall dearly pay for the violence

and iniquity of his hands.—Where then will be the happiness of this great and envied man?—Whose then will those things be, which he now places such trust and confidence in? When he must part with all his splendid acquisitions, life, and all; when those very things shall perish, for which he himself is likewise to perish for ever.

13. Behold, it is not of the LORD of hosts that the people labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?

14. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

anxiety; sorrow and damnation bring up the woful rear.—The gaining of wealth, without the blessing of God, is labouring in the fire; the possession is vanity, and the end is misery. Who then that is wise, would change an honest poverty for such riches; or the greatest, if innocent, sufferings, for so false, so destructive, a happiness?—This is a paradox to worldly men; they can conceive no felicity but in riches, and therefore admire and set their hearts upon them. But they who are filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord (that is to say, with Jesus Christ, who is often stiled the glory of the Lord, and the Lord of glory)¹, see plainly, by that true light, the folly, the vanity, the misery, of trusting in uncertain riches.

15. Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink: that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness.

16. Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the

Nor is covetousness fatal only in its issue and consequences, but in its present and immediate effects.—

“The love of money is a root of all evil:” A curse is inseparably annexed to it, from its first birth to its last end. The acquisition is full of trouble; the enjoyment embittered with cares and

anxiety; sorrow and damnation bring up the woful rear.—The gaining of wealth, without the blessing of God, is labouring in the fire; the possession is vanity, and the end is misery. Who then that is wise, would change an honest poverty for such riches; or the greatest, if innocent, sufferings, for so false, so destructive, a happiness?—This is a paradox to worldly men; they can conceive no felicity but in riches, and therefore admire and set their hearts upon them. But they who are filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord (that is to say, with Jesus Christ, who is often stiled the glory of the Lord, and the Lord of glory)¹, see plainly, by that true light, the folly, the vanity, the misery, of trusting in uncertain riches.

Others there be that place their happiness in the bottle, in rioting and drunkenness, excess and intemperance; saying, with the Epicure, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” Intemperance indeed is commonly a social vice; carries some shew and appearance of a virtue; seems not, like

¹ Heb. i. 3. Jam. ii. 1, &c.

LORDs right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spuing shall be on thy glory.

17. *For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee: and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid because of mens blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.*

one of the foregoing sins, pride, envy, covetousness, and oppression, to seek its own only, but also the things of others: It delights in conversation, and good company; pretends to benevolence, and love of its neighbour; appears intent upon promoting that joy and pleasure, that chearfulness and good-humour, which is

thought the best cordial of life, and the most sovereign remedy of its sorrows and cares. But, alas! what is this heaven of the Epicure, this *summum bonum*, and chief felicity, which the sensualist fancies to be no where else but in his cups and good cheer? What is it (if we believe this oracle of truth) but a false good, a true evil, a delusive bliss, a real woe? — *Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, &c.* — if it be a happiness, it is not the happiness of a man, but of a swine. — As the root it springs from, is only the animal life, and the mere appetite of taste its gratifications, if it aim no higher, must needs be unworthy the dignity of a rational being; and all its pleasures, base, brutal, inglorious. — *Thou art filled with shame for glory.* — The more of this happiness the drunkard enjoys, the more is his misery, the greater his woe: To be filled with liquor, is to be filled with shame; and he that drinks till he can hold no more, has one cup more to pledge, which he little thinks of; the cup of Divine vengeance, for abusing himself and his neighbour with such brutish excess. — *The cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spuing shall be on thy glory.* — And who can express the dire effects, or describe the dismal scene of horror and confusion, when once the drunken crew have tasted of the cup of God's fury, which is
sent

sent to crown and end their feast! How, of a sudden, is their wit and jollity converted into rage; their mirth into madness; their joy into sorrow; their friendship and good fellowship into brawls and contention; their jovial healths, and sparkling bowls, into bloodshed and violence! *For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee.*—As wild and savage beasts have their haunts in the woods of *Lebanon*, so fury and madness, like wild beasts, have their abode in the purlieus of drunkenness, to seize its followers, and devour every comfort of life, credit and estate.

—Hear this, all ye that love to indulge in yourselves, or to promote in others, the filthy pleasure of this bestial vice; and remember the just sentence of Divine wrath here pronounced against it, which will certainly take hold of you, even in this life, if not prevented by a timely repentance.—*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink: that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken ALSO, that thou mayest look on their nakedness, &c.*

18. *What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath graven it? the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusted therein, to make him dumb idols?*

19. *Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach: behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.*

Another wrong medium, by which poor mistaken man pursues after happiness, is idolatry, or chusing a false object of worship. And this is an error which the sober, the grave, the religious, man may fall into. As for the proud man, he careth not for God, neither is God in all his thoughts; he inverts the first commandment, and has no other God but himself: The covetous man worships only his gold, the glutton his belly.—Now all men promise themselves happiness

from the God they serve: But the true God only is

the source of true felicity ; for he is happiness itself, as well as the author and giver of it. They then that follow him, are in the only right way to find it ; they only who are united to him, are in the sure possession of it.—This is the right aim, this is the true end of man. Whereas he that seeks felicity in the creature, looks for it in the wrong place : He that asks it from a false God, applies to one that hath it not to give. The expectation of it from any but the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent on purpose to *teach* us the way, is as absurd, as it is impious : To search for it out of the way that he hath pointed out, is egregious folly, and the end a certain disappointment.—And what greater misery can there be, than the loss of happiness, especially when owing to our own folly ? They indeed who seek for happiness in the creature, may seem, in the judgment of the Wise man, “ the less to be blamed ; for they
 “ peradventure err (as he goes on) seeking God, and
 “ desirous to find him : howbeit neither are they to
 “ be pardoned.—But miserable are they, and in dead
 “ things is their hope, who call them gods, which
 “ are the works of mens hands ; gold and silver to
 “ shew art in, and resemblance of beasts, or a stone
 “ good for nothing, the work of an ancient hand.
 “ Then maketh he prayer for his goods, for his wife
 “ and children, and is not ashamed to speak to that
 “ which hath no life. For health he calleth upon that
 “ which is weak ; for life prayeth he to that which is
 “ dead ; for aid humbly beseecheth that which hath
 “ least means to help ; and for a good journey he
 “ asketh of that which cannot set a foot forward ; and
 “ for gaining and getting, and for good success of
 “ his hands, he asketh ability to do, of him that is
 “ most unable to do any thing, &c^m.”—How then
 can such persons but be disappointed of their hope,

who seek happiness where it is not to be found; who seek life in the ways of death?

30. *But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.*

The conclusion therefore of this excellent Lesson is this, *The Lord is in his holy temple*; that is, *The Lord is he, of whom alone we are to ask happiness: His holy*

temple the place alone we are to find it in.—Happiness is a plant that grows no-where but in holy ground: The seeds of it are sown in the holy Catholic Church militant upon earth; its harvest to be reaped in heaven.—Let the *earth* then, this vain world, and all its vain pretences to felicity, *keep silence before God*; while all false objects of worship, and all worshippers of false Gods, stand mute before him, convicted and convinced, that the dispensing of happiness, as well as punishing the guilty, is the sole prerogative of God: That without holiness, none can see him; without seeing him, none can be happy.





The Twenty-first SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. i.

P R E F A C E.

THE Church having chosen the season between Trinity Sunday and Advent (as we formerly observed) for instructing us in the practical duties of religion, her Proper Lessons for the Sundays have accordingly been selected out of such portions of Scripture, as might best serve to influence our obedience, and enforce a due performance of the third part of our baptismal promise.

To this end she hath hitherto been exciting us, by commands and precepts, by promises and threatenings, by rewards and punishments, by sundry eminent examples of virtue, and of judgments against vice, collected from the historical and prophetical writings of the Old Testament.

From these preliminary exercises she now proceeds professedly to instruct us in the very institutes and first principles of morality, which constitute the Christian ethics. And, for this reason, has chosen her Proper Lessons for the remainder of the Trinity season, out of the Proverbs of Solomon.

This admirable book she had before passed by, in the course of her Sunday's service; but now, with excellent judgment

udgment and method, returns to, as the richest treasure of moral and divine precepts: A book, which contains the most complete system of Morals, that ever was delivered to man, for the informing his manners, for regulating the passions, correcting vice, and recommending virtue.

It extends its instructions to every relation, and every state in life; and, with equal authority, directs the king and the subject, the rich and the poor, the parent and child, the young and the old, to the duties of their respective stations and conditions of life. For, as St. Basil saith, "it bridles the injurious tongue, corrects the wanton eye, and ties the unjust hand in chains: It persecutes sloth, chastises all absurd desires; teaches prudence, raises mens courage, and recommends temperance and chastity with such efficacy and force, as at once convinces the judgment, and engages the affections." In a word, this excellent treatise not only represents the nature and advantage of true wisdom, but leads us powerfully by the hand, through her paths, to our true happiness and chief end.

And now, that we are gradually come, under the wise conduct of our excellent Church, to the more immediate and express institution in divine morals, and have passed through many preparatory instructions of sacred historians and prophets, to be initiated in the school of Solomon, it seems necessary, for the better understanding of his instructions, to premise some definitions of the terms he uses, particularly of Wisdom, of Virtue, and Vice, which he treats of in this divine book.

We have already, by way of introduction to the duties of obedience, given a short scheme of definitions and deductions, to which I pray leave to refer the reader^a. — And oh! that some hand better able, and more at leisure, would undertake, out of this rich treasury and magazine of admirable precepts, to compile a regular and complete treatise of morality, and rescue this most useful science

^a See Introduction on General Preface to the Third Sunday for Trinity.

of ethic philosophy out of the hands of the Gentile moralists, or Gentilized Christians!—What has hitherto been published, by our modern authors on this subject, savours more of Aristotle's school than Solomon's; of the Ethnic, more than the Christian, philosophy; and literally falls under the rebuke of that absurdity, which our Lord condemns, of putting “a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, and new wine into old bottles^b.” The consequence of which is not only a manifest incongruity, but the marring of both. To such also may be properly applied, that angelical reproof, “Why seek ye the living among the dead^c?”

DEFINITIONS of Terms and Characters in the Book of Proverbs.

I. OF WISDOM.

Towards forming a system of ethics out of the Book of Proverbs; in the first place, we may observe, That, between this and the philosophical treatises of morality, grounded on the school plans, there appears this general difference, that, what they call ethics, or moral philosophy, this divine author styles WISDOM; for so the professed design of this book is declared (in chap. i. ver. 2.) to be “the teaching of WISDOM.” Next, we observe, that the several parts of this Wisdom are defined to consist in sundry Virtues: and, that its contrary, which, as a necessary consequence, he styles folly, lies in such actions as are opposite thereto. But then this is done occasionally only; this divine treatise not being framed, as human compositions on the same subject are, after a particular method, and according to the rules of art; it is compiled rather like the works of nature, with a rude but noble simplicity, and seeming irregularity: Its precepts are not digested into spruce order, like the little neatnesses and elegance of a pleasure garden, to entertain the sense or gratify curiosity; but, like the face of the creation, with a

^b Matt. ix. ver. 16, 17.

^c Luke xxiv. 5.

grandeur and magnificence suitable to the Almighty Author, and the rest of his glorious works. However, by degrees, and in proportion to the light the eye of the mind shall receive from the rays of the divine wisdom it treats of, there will appear a most beautiful harmony in the several parts of it, which will both charm and inform, delight and instruct, the soul; reducing it, by degrees, to that order and happy state, which vice has destroyed, and virtue alone can retrieve.

That doctrine therefore, or instruction, which concerns our manners, and which, by heathen moralists,^a is called philosophy, or the love of wisdom^a, is here, by our inspired author, more absolutely called wisdom, even wisdom itself; for so that God, who is the sole Author of it, styles it. Whence we may learn, that, although the love and desire of wisdom, and the rules concerning it, may be taught even by those who followed only the light of nature; yet God's word and grace alone can teach and inspire us with wisdom itself. And herein lies the main and most essential difference between the Gentile and the Christian morality: God himself is the Author and Teacher of this, mere man of the other. It must indeed be confessed, that the Gentile scheme of antient ethics is one of the finest and most noble productions of human reason; but still it extended no farther than the bounds and limits of the rational life.—Man seemed, in the Gentile state, to be left alone, and to himself, to let us see how far we are capable of apprehending and pursuing after virtue by the effort of nature, and the pure strength of reason. But divine morality, which the Scriptures call wisdom, is a divine thing, and the art of the divine and spiritual life. It goes beyond all the natural powers of reason, and surmounts the highest attainments of human capacity; because it is only from above, and the sole gift of God: He is the fountain-head and dispenser, as well as instructor, of it.—Heathen writers abound with many

^a So the word *philosophy* imports, and is therefore but the entrance or first step towards wisdom.

noble sentiments and fine descriptions of virtue; but none of them could impart the least degree of it to their bearers, nor communicate any share of that probity, which they professed to teach. Their finest speculations are but painted flame; well drawn indeed, but giving neither heat nor light; whereas God's word is a living oracle^e, a fiery law^f; it bestows not only heat and light, but life also; even the power to feel and do, as well as to see and know, his will.

Another very material defect in the wisdom of the ancient moralists is owing to that ignorance, which universally overspread the heathen world, both of the nature of GOD, and the nature of Man.—They neither knew the righteousness of God (as St. Paul^g calls that virtue which is agreeable to the rectitude and perfection of the Divine Nature), nor the source of human corruption, occasioned by the fall; so that their notions of moral good and evil were not only confused and very imperfect, but, in many respects, downright false^h. And, if they knew not the state of perfection, from whence man had fallen by original sin, how could they possibly give right or proper directions for the restoring him to that innocence and perfection of life, wherein that true virtue consists, which is the chief felicity, and, therefore, the truest wisdom of man.

II. OF VIRTUE.

The term Virtue is not once expressly named in this Book, nor scarcely in any other books of our Bibleⁱ. We must therefore look for it under some other name. What seems

to

^e Acts vii. 38. Λόγια ζωῆς. ^f Deut. xxxiii. 22. ^g Rom. i. 17.

^h See this proved at large by Lactantius, in his tract concerning false wisdom.

ⁱ The Hebrew word, which is rendered *virtus*, Prov. xii. 4. [*a virtuous woman, or woman of virtue*], denotes not that probity, which moralists understand by *virtue*; but rather strength and fortitude; as appears by the use of the same word in other places of Scripture. See Buxtorf.—In the 31st of Proverbs we read, *Many daughters have done virtuously*. The Hebrew is *Gnazu chail, fecerunt virtutem*:

to express it most fully, is, the word righteousness; this occurs most frequently in the Sacred Writings, but is of far greater latitude and extent, than the word virtue. Both the terms [of righteousness and virtue] differ, not only in the radical import and meaning of each, but also very materially in their general use and application, with respect to the true state and present condition of man. For whereas the true Christian religion is grounded upon the doctrine of Original Sin, and the belief of man's fall from a state of innocence, and favour with God, into a state of guilt and condemnation; whereby we have incurred, not only the penalty of the law, death; but an absolute disability to recover ourselves, or to perform any one duty, which, as creatures, we still owe to our Maker; the Sacred Writings (having constantly an eye to this) have no-where defined the rectitude of our actions by the term virtue, as philosophy doth (importing, both in the Greek and Latin tongues, a certain power inherent in

virtutem: Pagnin in the margin renders it, *fecerunt divitias*.—The nearest to the notion of virtue, as moralists understand it, is in *Ruth* iii. 11. *Thou art a virtuous woman*, where the word *Chail* again is used, and can only signify a general probity of manners; but it does not occur any-where, even in this sense, applied to a man, throughout the Old Testament. In the New Testament indeed we meet with the term *virtue* more than once;—*If there be any virtue*, saith St. Paul, *Phil.* iv. 8. and *2 Pet.* i. 3. *Hath called us to glory and virtue*; and again, ver. 5. *Add to your faith, virtue*. But, even in these places, it admits of a signification different from what it bears in the schools of moralists.—Indeed, the New Testament Canon having been written after the times of *Plato*, *Aristotle*, and other teachers of ethic philosophy, no wonder the name of *virtue*, which was in so great esteem among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, should be found also in the Sacred Writings, and, particularly in the epistles, which were addressed to some of them; but it does not follow, that the Apostles understood the term, *Agēn* in the same sense as the Gentiles did; for St. Paul is not positive in his precept: But (by way of concession) supposing there were such a thing as the *virtue* so much cried up, and taught by the heathen; and supposing there were a real praise and excellency therein, this he also recommends to his converts; that so Christians may not seem wanting in any perfection, much less come behind the heathens in what they called *virtue* and probity.

us, or strength in our own nature, to do good as ἀρετή, δύναμις, and *virtus* plainly do), but, by a word more expressive of the truth, namely (as we have already said), by righteousness, i. e. doing the thing that is right. The rule of this is the law of God; and the power (or virtue) whereby we perform it, is his grace and assistance; and not any innate faculty or power in our own natures, as both *virtus* and ἀρετή, in their root and primary sense, do imply. So that man, considered in his lapsed and depraved state, has not in himself the least virtue; but we are, in general, concluded under sin^k; and the word of truth hath more than once dictated, There is none good (i. e. none righteous, or truly virtuous), no not one.

Of the several KINDS of VIRTUE.

The particular species or kinds of virtue are, by heathen moralists, ranged into four general heads^l; viz. Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance. These they call cardinal^m virtues; that is, principal and chief; whereon the rest are supposed to turn (as a door on its hinges), and to depend.

But how much more agreeable to truth, and the tenour of the Sacred Scriptures, is that division, which, from thence, some primitive as well as modern Christian writers have made into seven principal heads, viz. Humility, Benevolence, Liberality, Chastity, Meekness, Temperance, and Diligence; all the lesser virtues, being derived from one or other of these seven, are properly reducible thereto.

Seven is a number, by which many sacred things in Holy Scripture are counted.—As the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost;—the Seven Spirits of God;—the Seventh Day or Sabbath;—the Seventh Year or Jubilee;—the

^k Gal. iii. 24.

^l The same division is followed by *Philo the Jew*; and by some of the Christian fathers, as *St. Ambrose*, &c.

^m From *Cardo* the hinge of a door.

Seven Priests with Seven trumpets compassing Jericho Seven days, &c.; and hence, by some, Seven is called the number of perfection; for which reason also the house of wisdom (i. e. the Church) may well be said to be builded with Seven pillars, Prov. ix. 1. both as it denotes the perfection, beauty, and strength of the Church, which is the house wherein alone true wisdom dwells; and, as it most aptly describes this lovely septenary of virtues, which are the best support, as well as ornaments of the Church. And that this is a rational exposition of this allegory, as also that our distribution of the moral virtues into seven heads, was a noted and received notion in the primitive Church, we have the testimony of St. Chrysostom to vouch and support the sameⁿ. “Although the spirits (or
“ operations) of virtues be diverse, yet they are called Se-
“ ven, because, from these seven, all the kinds of virtues
“ do proceed; which spirits Esaias reckons up, and Solo-
“ mon alludes to, where he saith, Wisdom hath build-
“ ed her house, she hath hewen out her seven pil-
“ lars^o.”

If, by this father's referring to Isaiah, it may seem to any, that he meant the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Ghost, enumerated in the eleventh chapter of that prophet, there need no dispute; it seeming no difficult matter to make out, that the seven gifts of the holy Spirit, and the seven principal virtues in morality, are so far from differing, that, in effect, they are the same; varying no otherwise than form and substance do; one of which, without the other, cannot subsist. But, what puts it out of all question, that, by the spiritus virtutum, he had an eye to these seven moral virtues, is what he adds of the vices opposite thereto; for so he immediately goes on, “So on the part of the
“ devil, although there be many spirits [or kinds] of vices,

ⁿ In Matt. xii. Hom. xxx.

^o Quamvis plures sint spiritus virtutum, tamen septem dicuntur, quia ex illis septem omnes species virtutum procedunt; quos spiritus enumerat Esaias, & Solomon signat, dicens, sapientia ædificavit sibi domum suam, & subdidit sibi columnas septem.

“ yet they are usually called Seven, because, from these
 “ principal vices, all other vices are derived ^p. ”

If it be further objected, that the author of the book of wisdom (ch. viii. 7.) has given a kind of sanction to that other distribution of the cardinal or principal virtues into four heads, where he saith, “ If a man love righteousness, her labours are virtues, for she teacheth temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude ; which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life ; ” we may answer, It appears indeed, by this passage, that this writer was some Hellenistical Jew ^q, who was conversant in the heathen moralists ; but (to understand him right) if we consult the context, it appears he is there speaking of wisdom : “ Her labours,” saith he, “ are virtues ; ” so that it is she, which teacheth temperance, &c. And, we may observe, that, although he name those four, which are usually called virtues, yet he doth not call them so, nor define them as principals, from whence other virtues are derived ; but rather asserts, that these four (and, consequently, all other moral virtues) do flow from wisdom ; that is, as he certainly means it, from the knowledge and fear of God, or true religion. These four then are no more than so many streams issuing from that living fountain ; and, therefore, according even to his doctrine, ought rather to be stiled derivative, than cardinal or principal virtues.

Wherefore, although we should grant, that this author of the book of wisdom favours this distribution of the principal virtues into a quaternion, as the Gentile moralists have done, yet we see that he founds them on wisdom, or the knowledge and fear of God, as the true Solomon doth. This then is their only right foundation ; but this

^p Sic ex parte diaboli, quamvis multi spiritus vitiorum, tamen septem dicuntur, quoniam ex illis principalibus vitiis, vitia universa nascuntur.

^q These Jews were called Hellenistical, or Hellenists, who used, in their synagogues, the Greek version of the Bible : And are, therefore, Acts vi. 1. called Grecians, Ἑλληνιστῶν, and distinguished from the Hebrews ; though both sorts were Jews.

the heathens were quite ignorant of. The wisest of them (the Stoics) if we hear Seneca, placed their highest wisdom in themselves only; for he says, "In this consists the whole wisdom of man, that he confide in himself, be satisfied with himself, and with the good of those things which spring from himself." But Solomon's philosophy will teach us, That such wisdom is mere folly: "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." Prov. xxvi. 12.

OF VICE, and its several Kinds.

It is also remarkable, that Vice, which is the general term for all actions and dispositions that are contrary to virtue, is not once, that I know of, called by this name in the whole Bible; but is always expressed by some word, which denotes a deviation from the will of God; and so plainly alludes and refers to the breach of that law, which God originally impressed upon man, or which he hath since revealed: It is usually defined in Scripture by the words sin, transgression, disobedience, iniquity, faults, wickedness, unrighteousness, &c.

As to the particular kinds of vice, especially as it relates to our moral actions, and so comes more properly under the head of ethics, or moral philosophy, they are distinguished by the actions, which flow from the bitter root of sin; and, for that reason, are called often in Scripture its fruits; or, by their opposition to those virtues, wherein the true righteousness of man consists; and, in particular, to those seven virtues we have before mentioned; and are called pride, envy, covetousness, luxury, gluttony, anger, and sloth, in opposition to humility, benevolence, liberality, &c.: These seven take in all the kinds of moral evil; but the branches, which are contained under each general head of these seven vices, are very various and spreading; but may, without much difficulty, be reduced to their principals, as hath been done in the right use of Lent, for the use of penitents; quod vide.

* Summa sapientia sibi fidere, contentum esse semetipso, & de se nascentium bonis.

The importance of distinguishing vice and virtue, as St. Jerom observes, is very great; not only because some vices bear so near a resemblance to virtue, that the difference is hard to be discerned; but also, because the opposition, when they are compared together, does the more strongly set off the beauty of the one, and the deformity of the other.—This method is pursued by our Wise man, who, for the most part, instructs us by the way of comparison^s, weighing vice against virtue, and setting before us, as it were in a picture, the several lights and shades; that so the one may the more strongly display and illustrate the other; and each appear in their true and native colours.

This kind of antithesis, or opposition of virtue and vice (or more properly, as the Scripture calls it, of good and evil), God is pleased to make use of in other parts of his word; this, therefore, must be the most efficacious way of instruction; for so he tells the Israelites, that “he had set life and good, death and evil, blessing and cursing, before them.” But our mere human moralists, both antient and modern, take different plans, and so fall infinitely short of our Divine instructor. They take great pains to give us long catalogues of virtues; describe and set them off with great pomp of eloquence; but the nature of vice, its effects, or distinguishing properties, they too slightly pass over, or seem ignorant of. Of this our great Lord Bacon complains,—*Præposuerunt isti exemplaria bella & luculenta, &c.* “These men have proposed to us neat and beautiful copies, and given us accurate and fine descriptions of good, virtue, duties, felicity, &c. as the true scope and object of the human will and desire; but how the mind may be formed to attain those ends,”—[aut nihil præcipiunt, aut perfunctorie & minus utiliter], “they either give no rules, or, in so slight a manner, as to avail little or nothing.” And this defect he ascribes to their neglect of searching more narrowly into the springs of good and evil, and their con-

^s See chap. xi. for 23d Sunday after Trinity.

15, 19.

^u Vid. lib. vii. de augment. scient.

^t Deut. xxx.

sequences. "Had they diligently searched out the very roots of good and evil, yea, the fibres of those roots, they would, in my opinion, have given great light to all those things which were to fall under their inquiry".

—These observations being premised, we shall, through God's blessing, be the better enabled to understand the following Lessons out of this excellent Book of Proverbs, and consequently to reduce them to practice.

To conclude: It imports every Christian man to know, and well understand, that they are the three theological graces of faith, hope, and charity, which turn the moral virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, or, as we have called them, of humility, benevolence, &c. into Christian virtues; insomuch that we are bound to believe and confess they are no virtues in a Christian without those three graces. Morality, which is the pure law of nature, might, and doubtless did, save an heathen, who conscientiously observed it; but morality alone will not now save us, who live under the new law of grace.—This consideration, if well attended to, would solve the long disputed question which the Pelagians held of old, and our modern deists have revived, concerning morality and grace. It would likewise silence the vain janglings of some, in relation to faith and works, which are but two other names for grace and morals. Moral virtues without grace, though good in themselves, are not so in a Christian. They are the works of mere natural reason; and therefore, now that the Christian dispensation is come, they are justly counted (if without faith) to be but dead works. It is by faith in Christ only, and by the grace of his Holy Spirit, that they are animated, and made living works, and good works; yea, so far good, that, without them, faith itself is of no benefit or effect; but rather like a tree that is dead, and without fruit.

It is true, the religion of nature (as we have seen in the heathen philosophy) taught both the reasonable-

^w Si radices ipsas boni & mali, & radicum illarum fibras indagassent, ingentem, meo judicio, lucem illis omnibus, quæ postea in inquisitionem ventura fuissent, assudissent.

ness and practice of moral virtue: And, in them, it was commendable, and even rewardable, because it was agreeable to the light of reason, and the law of nature, under which they lived. But revealed religion hath advanced it to a much higher degree of clearness and obligation, and distinguishes it by the stile of righteousness, not only as it is performed in obedience to the divine command, as well as reason; and, therefore, is doing the thing that is right; but, as it is elevated to its highest perfection (and therefore done in a right manner) by the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, who first infuses, and then works all our works in us^{*}; yea, sanctifies all our common actions, and thereby makes them all good and rewardable, because they are wrought in God.

But now, that the light of the glorious Gospel hath shined unto us, whoso trusts to moral virtue, exclusive of grace, or to grace and faith only, without the concurrence of virtue and good works, he is still in the state of nature; nay, in a much worse state than the Jew or the Gentile; because he is without excuse. Such therefore are not entitled to the great and glorious promises of the Gospel, because they reject the means of grace, and of all those salutary helps it affords and offers to us, for making both our persons and works acceptable to God.—In a word, He only, that hath a true faith in Christ, can have an assured Hope: He only, that hath the assurance of hope, can have a true charity, or the love of God.—And this love he hath, because he knows the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.—And that Christian only, who hath this faith, this hope, this charity, is now the truly moral man.

^{*} Isa. xxvi. 12.



The Twenty-first SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. i.

1. **T**HE proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;

2. To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding;

3. To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;

4. To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

THIS seems to be the general title and inscription to the whole book.

As if he had said, "The

"moral sentences, or wise

"sayings, of Solomon son of

"David, king of Israel, writ-

"ten and designed for the

"instruction of men in the

"precepts and practice of

"true religion and virtue."

—True religion only teaches

to know true wisdom; and vir-

tue, or good manners, is the right practice of it. The

principal parts of which are; 1st, *Justice*, in rendering to

all their due: 2dly, *Judgment*, or distributive justice, in

all trusts and offices, acting and judging with perfect

uprightness: 3dly, *Equity*, in all our dealings; not

only just and honest, but kind, gentle, and merciful.

And these things not only the wise and the learned

are capable of, but even the young and the simple may

know and receive, if they will come to hear the instruc-

tions of wisdom, and accept the gifts she offers.—

How contrary is this to the method of the heathen moralists, who admitted none to their schools, but the learned and adult. Whereas we see Divine wisdom, the philosophy of heaven, like the Divine Providence, extends to all ranks and degrees of men alike, and is freely offered to the acceptance of all.—And if *Solomon*, the wisest of men, the greatest of kings, and son of the most pious *David*, wrote these Proverbs for the use of all, with what reverence and desire should we approach to hear and learn them! with what meekness attend to and embrace! with what zeal and diligence digest and perform them!—especially when we consider, that the wisdom of *Solomon* was the wisdom of GOD, communicated by the Holy Ghost to him, and he but the instrument, or channel, to convey it to us.

5. *A wise man will hear, and will increase, learning: and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:*

6. *To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.*

From hence to the tenth chapter seems to be a preface to this book of Proverbs, or a preliminary discourse to fit and prepare our hearts for the reception of Divine wisdom.—The first requisite is here premised, that a man should be *wise*; that is, so wise, at least, as to consider and be sensible of his own ignorance, and want of heavenly wisdom, and consequently of the necessity of instruction and learning.—Such a one will come to the teacher, and *hear* what is said to him.—An humble sense of our ignorance and imperfections is that poverty of spirit, which Christ hath pronounced blessed^a; and consequently is the best use of our own reason, and of the natural talents which God has bestowed upon us, for receiving the instructions of Divine wisdom, of *attaining unto the wise counsels, and increasing*

^a Matt. v.

in the saving knowledge and heavenly truths of true religion.

7. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

The next requisite, or qualification, for the reception of Divine wisdom, is *the fear of GOD*: Not only that general apprehension, which all men naturally have of his Being and Godhead, but an awful sense of his justice and holiness, which the conscience and conviction of our own guilt and unworthiness must suggest to us.—*The fear* arising from hence is the *beginning* of, and very first step to, that *knowledge*, which alone can direct us to true happiness.—But to us Christians, this fear must be the *fear of the LORD*: Not only believing and fearing him as GOD, which Jews and Heathens do, but fearing and reverencing him as our *Lord* and Master; believing in him as Our Lord, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world.—The other kind of fear may make us tremble, and so hath torment: But the fear of the Lord JESUS, as our Mediator and Redeemer, casteth out all servile and disquieting fear, and is properly the *beginning* of all saving *knowledge*. Without this, all other knowledge is useless and vain: This only is the true wisdom; and all that *despise* it, and neglect those *instructions*, which direct us to it, are *fools*: They have not so much as the natural sense of self-preservation; they have not the understanding of men.—*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

8. *My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:*

9. *For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy*

Next to the fear of God, is the fear of parents; to wit, that honour and reverence which is due to both *father* and *mother*, even by the very law of nature; but enforced more strongly by

head, and chains about thy neck. the command of God.—

Our spiritoal parents are likewise included in this precept; more particularly the ministers of God, who have the immediate care of our souls; yea, all such as Providence hath appointed to be our teachers and instructors. This precept extends also more particularly to that obedience which is due to the Church, which is the mother of us all, and to *Jesus Christ* her head, and the author of our spiritual birth. But the fear of God must be the *beginning*, and first principle, of all filial duty and reverence. This, of course, will make a child dutiful to every kind of parents: But the instruction of parents is the best method for instilling that sense of piety towards God and themselves, and implanting religious principles in the heart of a child.—But as children are mostly taken with gay and fine things, the reward of filial duty is here compared to *ornaments of grace*, and *chains about the neck*; to signify both the pleasure and delight, the honour and respect, which a due regard to the instructions of parents will not fail to procure.

10. *My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*

11. *If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:*

12. *Let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole, as those that go down into the pit:*

13. *We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil:*

The next, and most important advice, is to avoid ill company.—“The whole “world lieth in wickedness,” saith an apostle^b; and nothing can be more proper or seasonable than for instructors of youth to caution their inexperience against bad examples.—The Wise man here instances, in one particular vice, the love of money, as being the most predominant and common of all

^b 1 John v. 19.

14. *Cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse:* others; and shews how it leads to the most enormous crimes, and is indeed the very root of all evil.—How

15. *My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path.* flattering soever at first the allurements of good fellowship, and a common purse, may be to entice the unwary

16. *For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.* youth with specious hopes of profit and pleasure, dismal and horrible are the

consequences which they generally end in; even bloodshed and murder.—From hence may all learn, especially all young persons, and all beginners in religion, how fatal a snare to virtue is the love of the world.—All worldly conversation and friendships are dangerous, and rather to be avoided than courted, by every disciple of Christ, by every true son of God, if ever he hope to gain the ornaments of grace, and the fruits of immortality, which wisdom bestows.—Therefore,

If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.] All sinners are thieves; they will rob thee of thy innocence, if thou consort with them. Nay, they are murderers: They will not only slay thy soul, but perhaps thy body too, if thou cast in thy lot amongst them, and follow the same wicked courses.—The ambition and pride, the vain customs and fashions, the very complaisance and smiles of the world are insidious, and full of deadly poison. They wound, and we feel it not; they kill, and we perceive it not; they swallow up alive as the grave, and, Judas-like, betray to death with a kiss.—Who so therefore would escape this death, this only evil death, let him renounce the world, with its vanities and pomps, according to his baptismal promise, and follow the Wise man's advice in our Lesson: *My son, walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path.*

422 *The Twenty-first SUNDAY* Prov. i.

17. *Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.*

18. *And they lay wait for their own blood, they lurk privily for their own lives.*

19. *So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain: which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.*

and out-witting others, is, in truth, but *lurking privily for their own lives*.—The silly *bird*, if at any time it hasteth to the snare, not knowing that it is for its life^c; hath but one life to lose; but man has two; the spiritual and the natural. The first is lost by every wilful deliberate sin. And, alas! how often is the natural life also lost, by the hands of justice, for public crimes, or shortened, and brought to an untimely end, by our own fault, through some irregularity or excess, and the want of Divine wisdom.

20. *Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets:*

21. *She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,*

22. *How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?*

The worldly wise are more foolish than the birds of the air. If the *net* be spread in the sight of any *bird*, it will fray it away, and give it timely warning to consult its own safety. But these more infatuated lovers of earthly things are so fond of the bait, that they even spread the net *for their own blood*: Their artful *nets* and contrivances for ensnaring

The Wise man having cautioned his pupil against the danger and mischief of bad company, proceeds to direct his attention to the dictates of wisdom. And here our inspired moralist calls on all persons, excluding none^d from his school; but inviting even the *simple ones*, the poor and ignorant, as well as the learned and the great, no longer to *love simplicity*, to

^c Ch. vii. 23.

^d See Preface.

23. Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

delight in their scorning, or hate knowledge; but to come to wisdom, as the only guide to true felicity; to turn at her reproof; and even to receive her spirit, as well as

hear her words. And that he may encourage every man, of every state and condition, to search after and obtain her, Wisdom herself is introduced as appearing in the most public places, and uttering her voice to all in general; as well to those without and in the streets, that is, to the very meanest rank of people, as to those in the chief place of concourse, i. e. in kings courts and senates: Not only in the openings of the gates, that is, the courts of law, or councils of state, but in the city also, i. e. among the men of business, the trading and busy part of mankind.—Thus the true wisdom is every where present; she appears, speaks, calls, to every one in every place; offering herself, and her gifts, to the acceptance of all.—But altho' all men naturally seek after happiness, and wisdom alone is the giver of it, and the guide, yet few there be that listen to her counsels, and fewer still that walk in her paths. And what is the reason of so perverse a conduct, but that the parting with their lusts is made the condition of their happiness? They reject the very thing they wish for, because they dislike the terms.—Either they love simplicity, through ignorance of the deadly nature of sin, and therefore will not repent; or delight in their scorning, and are too proud to believe the holy mysteries of religion; or they hate knowledge, as an enemy to pleasure, thwarting their will, and exposing their folly; and therefore refuse to obey, or even to hear, the precepts of obedience.—Hence it comes to pass, that the first speech of wisdom begins with a reproof, and is a call to repentance: So here [Turn ye at my reproof]: So John the Baptist; so our Lord; “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—

But, alas! men are generally so averſe to *reproof*, and ſo fond of their ſins, that they will not accept of heaven itſelf at the expence of parting with them.

Here follow the threat-

24. *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;*

25. *But ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:*

26. *I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh;*

27. *When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.*

28. *Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:*

29. *For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD.*

30. *They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.*

31. *Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.*

nings of wiſdom, and the danger of rejecting her kind and earneſt invitations to a life of virtue and true happineſs.—They that ſlight the repeated tenders of her grace, that *ſet at nought all her counſels*, and *will none of her reproof*, ſhall be convinced of their folly when it is too late. When their ſins have taken hold of them, and they begin to feel, what before they would not believe, then, repenting and groaning for anguiſh of ſpirit, they will be compelled to bewail the neceſſary conſequences of their own perverſeneſs, and to cry out for help; nay, to call upon wiſdom for direction and relief in their diſtreſs; but then ſhe will turn a deaf ear to them; tho' they ſeek her early, they *ſhall not find her*.—It is obſervable, that when trouble comes, none are ſo much at a loſs what to do, or how to behave, as thoſe who have ſlighted the calls of religion, and lived without God in the world. Then

they cry to all they meet, What ſhall we do? what ſhall we do? Their own ignorance, and want of wiſdom,

wisdom, they are compelled to own in the time of distress; but where to go for it, they know not.—The wisdom they want, cometh only from God; but him, and his gifts, they are strangers to. They refused to come to him when he called, and offered his help; their refusal is now repaid in kind. They cry indeed for wisdom to help them; but they cry not to God, whose gift she is. Either conscience checks their address to him, and guilt stops their mouths; or else a reprobate mind has lost all sense of God, and all feeling, but the anguish of their present sufferings.—And this is the fatal and egregious folly of sin! it seeks happiness, but rejects wisdom; so makes it impossible to *find*: It necessarily leads to misery and distress, and makes it impossible to avoid or escape: It abhors the medicine, tho' it impatiently wish for the cure.—To feel the pains, but not the guilt, of sin, is the wretched state of judicially-hardened sinners in this world; to feel both pain and guilt, without hope of mercy, is the desperate state of the damned.

32. *For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.* The first step in the course of sin, is a *turning away* from God: This must needs be folly, because it forsakes wisdom. Nor can there be a surer omen, or more fatal earnest, of punishment for such simplicity, than this; because it is forsaking of their own mercy: The very fruit of their own ways is unhappiness and misery. And the more they prosper in their wickedness, the more certain and heavy will their destruction be.

33. *But who so hearkneth unto me, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.* Who is this wisdom, that here SPEAKS to mankind; that so affectionately invites to happiness, so earnestly warns against the fatal consequences of sin, but JESUS the
the

426 *The Twenty-first SUNDAY, &c.* Prov. i.
the Saviour and Lover of souls?—He is the WORD
and Wisdom of GOD, and the only Righteousness of
man.—To hear and receive him, is the only way to
obtain happiness and escape misery; the only means
to *dwell safely* in his Church here, and to be freed
from all possibility of danger hereafter; to *be quiet* ,
not only *from evil* itself, but from the very *fear* there-
of.—As the Divine Providence shall watch over such
a one in this life, so the eternal fruition of God in the
next, shall make his happiness as secure and eternal,
it will be great and glorious.





The Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. ii.

ARGUMENT.

GOD, under the character of wisdom (for God is wisdom itself, it being the peculiar appellation of the Son of God, who is the professed lawgiver and instructor of mankind) promiseth true piety and virtue to his obedient children; security from evil ways, and evil company, and direction in good paths.

1. *MY son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;*

2. *So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding:*

3. *Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding:*

4. *If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her, as for hid treasures:*

THIS Lesson begins with the same endearing and affectionate appellation of *son*, which we met with in the foregoing chapter, and which is so often repeated in the sequel of these proverbial instructions; to inculcate to us, no doubt, what cannot be too often observed, that the obedience most pleasing and acceptable to God, is that which flows from a filial fear and love. For this reason, in the delivery

livery of these precepts of wisdom, he lays aside the majesty and solemnity of Almighty Power, the thunders and burnings, the blackness, and darkness, and tempest, wherewith the law was delivered; and addressees his people in the most soft and tender manner; applies to their affections, rather than to their fears; draws them by the cords of a man, the force of love and interest, more than by authority; condescends to advise them as children, rather than to command them as slaves or servants.—And how persuasive should those instructions be, which infinite wisdom dictates, and paternal love and tenderness recommends! The very character and relation of Father, which the Almighty here assumes, lays such an obligation, as no generous mind can resist; no pretence of difficulty excuse, or dispense with.—But observe and remark well the manner of this divine address: It is said, *If thou wilt receive my words, &c. Then shalt thou understand, &c.* these particles *if* and *then*, do plainly shew, that the attainment of wisdom is not absolute, but conditional. And in these four first verses, the terms and conditions are set before us; which ought therefore to be carefully attended to:

I.—It is plainly intimated, that we must be regenerate; *i. e.* born to God in baptism by water and the Holy Ghost, and so made his children by adoption and grace^a. It is to *sons*, to his own children, that God here speaks: None have a right to be so called, or that God should speak to them as a Father, till they have been made his children in the laver of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. For “as many as have so received him, to them hath he given power to become the sons of God^b.” This then is the first condition to qualify us for the reception of divine wisdom.

^a *John* iii.

^b *John* i. 12.

Secondly, The second qualification required, is an humble and diligent attention;—*So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom*; that is, so attend to her precepts, as not only to hear and listen to them, but to resolve to make them the rule both of life and practice.

Thirdly, The next is meditation; a serious and affectionate reflection on what we hear. It is not enough to hear, and even to remember, the words of wisdom, but we must ponder upon, and lay them up in our hearts^c. The ear and the memory are but the receivers and conveyancers of the good seed; the heart only is the soil, where it will take root and fructify^d.—*If thou wilt hide my commandments with thee,—and apply thine heart to understanding.*

Fourthly, The fourth condition, and which ought to be the result and consequence of meditation, must be an earnest and passionate desire of wisdom.—*If thou criest after knowledge, &c.* It is the natural voice of that poverty in spirit, that hunger and thirst after righteousness, which Christ has pronounced blessed, to cry unto God for relief. A keen sense of our want of wisdom, and of its infinite value and concern to us, cannot but inflame our desires, and extort from us as importunate a cry after it, as is that of a beggar who is perishing with hunger and thirst; such a cry as was that, in the Gospel, of the blind man, the Leper, the Syrophenician woman, to Christ, for recovery of their respective maladies.

Fifthly, The proper language of such earnest desire is prayer: And this is the fifth condition of acquiring divine wisdom,—*If thou liftest up thy voice, &c.* Lift it up, that is, to our Father which is in heaven; not seeking it from men, from the rudiments of this world, from vain philosophy, or human reason; much less from riches and honours, to which the flattery of this world is wont to ascribe wisdom;

^c Luke ii. 51.

^d Matt. xiii. 23. Luke viii 15.

430 *The Twenty-second SUNDAY* Prov. 2.

these are all earthly and low; this (as Lord Bacon well observes) is "seeking the living among the dead." The true wisdom is from above, and he that lacketh it must seek it from thence, and by earnest prayer *lifted up* to the Father of lights, bring down that good and perfect gift from him, who is the only giver of it.

Sixthly, The last requisite, and without which all others will prove ineffectual, is our own sincere endeavours.—The most constant attendance on hearing the word of God, and reading the Scriptures, the deepest meditation, and most fervent prayer, are to no purpose, except we join our own labour and industry, and add practice to all the other means of grace. Neither must the endeavours we use be languid and faint, but proportionable to the importance of the blessing, as well as to our exigence and need. We are to *seek her as silver*, &c. Here the example of covetous and worldly men is proposed to our imitation: Our diligence, in seeking heavenly riches, must at least equal their pains in searching for earthly treasure; we must refuse no labour, decline no danger, stick at no difficulties, nor give over the search, till we find: Yea, nor then be satisfied, even when we have found this golden mine, but, like the miser still, the more we get, the more desire: Covetousness here is a laudable virtue. And here we shall be sure to increase our store; for wisdom is an inexhaustible treasure, and easy to be found of them that diligently seek her.

5. *Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD; and find the knowledge of God.*

In the first chapter, ver. 7. we are told, the first step to wisdom is the *fear of the Lord*; here a promise is made to all her faithful votaries, that they shall *understand that fear*; that is, they shall have a right ap-

prehension of the true nature of it, so as equally to avoid the two extremes of it, superstition and presumption; they shall obtain an intimate and experimental sense of the power of religion, and find what they have been diligently seeking, the true saving *knowledge of God*; shall know and feel the love of God, which passeth knowledge.—Not so much believe as know, yea, taste and see how gracious, how great, just, and holy, the Lord is.—Where the spiritual life is strong and active, there faith is almost swallowed up of fruition, even in this life.

Here the reasons are given, why we are to seek for wisdom from GOD. The first reason is, because it is *his gift*. And the expression of its *coming out of his mouth*, teaches us plainly the very same doctrine which *Isaiab* delivers, chap. xi. and our Church^h, from thence, instructs us in, namely, that wisdom and understanding, &c. are the special gifts of the HOLY GHOST. For as the Holy Spirit of God is often called, in Scripture,

6. *For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.*

7. *He layeth up sound wisdom^f for the righteous: he is a buckler to them^g that walk uprightly.*

8. *He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.*

9. *Then shalt thou understand righteousness and judgment and equity; yea, every good path.*

^f Ver. 7. *Sound wisdom*.] The original signifies essence, substance; a word of emphatical signification. Well may virtue or wisdom be so called, because the essence thereof is stable, durable, real; whereas vice is a non-entity, an absence or defect of being. Yea, all created things are, in themselves, but vain and transitory.—But then essence, or being, itself, is no other than God: God himself therefore is that *sound wisdom*, which is laid up for the righteous. See what Bishop *Berkley* says in his *Siris*, Art. 336. about *Entia* and *essia*.

^g Ibid. *A buckler to them, &c.*] This agrees with what God said to *Abraham*, “I am thy shield, &c.” *Gen.* xv. 1. which place the Wise man seems here to have had an eye to.

^h See the office of Confirmation.

432 *The Twenty-second SUNDAY* Prov. 2.

the Spirit, or Breath, of his mouth ; and our Lord, when his disciples were to be inspired with these gifts, breathed upon them, and said, " Receive ye the " Holy Ghost ;" so we may observe, that the seven gifts, which are commonly called the gifts of the Holy Ghost, are here, by the same Holy Spirit, enumerated, at least very plainly implied ; namely, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, ver. 6. Counsel, and ghostly strength, ver. 7, 8. piety, and holiness, ver. 9.

II. The second reason, why we are to apply to God for wisdom, is, because he is not only the giver, but the guardian and keeper, as well as dispenser, of these heavenly riches.—Do we lack counsel? here is a constant friend, a sure resort of sound wisdom laid up in store for our use.—Do we want strength? He himself is our *buckler* in all dangers ; our defender against all enemies. The treasures he lays up for his children are not only inestimably great, but infinitely secure ; so that neither rust nor moth can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. So that we may well say,

*How happy are thy servants, Lord,
How sure is their defence!
Unerring wisdom is their guide ;
Their guard, omnipotence.*

III. The third reason for our addressing to God for wisdom, is, because the *paths of judgment* are in his custody and keeping, ver. 3. None can walk in them without his leave, nor keep in their way, except he preserve them therein. For *judgment*, that is, the administration of justice, both in public and private life, hath not only its enclosures^b, namely, the

^b *Enclosures.*] See Bishop *Andrews* on the Tenth Commandment, p. 90. The *Jews*, saith he, report, that besides the law of God, the antientest saying among them, and such as they called *dictum sapientum*, was this, *Facite circumscriptiōem legi*, " Make
" a bor-

the laws of God and man; but every *path* therein has its due bounds and limits; to go beyond, or fall short of, these, is equally inconsistent with justice; and the confines between the two extremes are often so imperceptible, that no man but will transgress, without the guidance and direction of heavenly wisdom.

IV. And therefore, fourthly, if we have her for our convoy, we shall never err or do amiss, either in judgment or practice; but, in all cases of moral righteousness, shall be enabled to distinguish between good and evil; and, in matters of justice and equity, be able to discern between right and wrong: Yea, to understand, and be well acquainted with, *every good path*, both the duties and the truths of religion, which lead to, and constitute, a genuine piety and true holiness; as well as apprehend the maxims of prudence and honesty, which regulate and adorn the conduct of human life.

10. *When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;*

11. *Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:*

12. *To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things.*

We find then, that *wisdom* is not connatural to us, nor to be earned without pains: Its beginning is fear, its search is labour and trouble, strong cries and tears; but the enjoyment of it is an inexpressible pleasure, a never-failing security, a constant preservative of innocence, a sure fund of happiness and peace. But then, it must not lie in mere spe-

culative notions, abstruse learning, or worldly policy, which only fill the head, and entertain the fancy; but must descend from the brain into the *heart*, and

“a border to the law.” It teacheth us a good point of wisdom, not to come near the pit, for so we shall be sure not to fall in.—*Oportet sepe facere*; “We must make a fence.”

434 *The Twenty-second SUNDAY* Prov. 2.

take possession of our very *soul*; must pass, from the memory and understanding, to the will and affections. Then, and not till then, shall we be capable of tasting the ravishing sweets, the divine pleasure, which heavenly wisdom bestows.

See what the Wise man says, *Ecclus. iv.* from the 11th to the 20th verse.

13. *Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness:*

14. *Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked.*

15. *Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths.*

directly contrary to those of wisdom, and her followers. These have wisdom itself to guide them; understanding, to teach; counsel, to advise; strength, to assist; knowledge, to inform; piety, to save; and holiness, to crown them with eternal bliss.—Whereas, on the contrary, the wicked, being led by folly, are *froward* and unteachable, rash and perverse, dark and ignorant, bold and evil, but not valiant for the truth. And, as it will appear, in the sequel of our Lesson, are given up to the pernicious illusions of sense (that *stranger* which flattereth with her words, ver. 16.), and to impurity of life, which, at length, shall plunge them into utter destruction; according as it is said in the 23d verse, *the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out.*

16. *To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words:*

'Tis usual with the Wise man, in this treatise of divine ethics, to place virtue and vice in opposition to each other; that so the light of the one may be the more set off by the dark shade of the other. Thus here, by a beautiful contrast, he represents the manners and ways of evil men, as

The most obvious and literal sense is, a caution against the allurements of lewd women; from which divine wisdom is the best security.

17. *Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God:*

18. *For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.*

19. *None that go unto her, return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.*

security. But there is a spiritual, as well as carnal adultery; to wit, when, forsaking the wholesome advice of the guides and instructors of our youth, and *forgetting the covenant of our God*, we break through all the restraints and obligations of the baptismal vow, by which the soul, as a chaste virgin, was espoused to Christ¹.—

To deviate from his love, and embrace the vain pomps and glory of this world, with the covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, is a whoredom from God, a renouncing of life.—To prefer vice to virtue, error to truth, and the flattering suggestions of nature, or natural reason, to the dictates of religion and divine grace, is a preferring darkness to light, hell to heaven.—Whatever fair promises are made us, of profit or pleasure, in the broad way of sin, they are all insidious and false; they *flatter with their words*, but lead to perdition, to a death *from whence there is no return*. Yea, forasmuch as among the dead some are happy (for blessed are the dead which die in the Lord) that therefore all are not miserable in that state, the inspired penman, to put it out of all question, that the death he here speaks of, is an evil death, and utter destruction, uses an expression which determines the sense to that of a miserable, eternal death. For what we render, *her paths unto the dead*, is, in the Hebrew, *to the Rephaim* or giants; by which is meant, as Bishop Patrick well observes, to those ungodly giants of the old world, whose filthiness and violence first corrupted mankind, and brought the flood upon the earth; and for their wickedness were consigned to that un-

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 20.

436 *The* Twenty-second SUNDAY Prov. 2.

happy state of the dead, which we call damnation. — That this therefore is the end, and certain consequence, of all impurity, all filthiness of flesh and spirit.

20. *That thou mayst walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.*

Though the way of vice be crouded with greater numbers, and is most frequented, yet the way of virtue and religion has ever the best company. There never want examples indeed of excellent persons, who have gone before us; or the society of *good* and *righteous* men even still to accompany us in the strait and narrow way: But wisdom is the only sure guide to keep us in the right *path*, and conduct us safe to the end of our pilgrimage.

21. *For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it.*

There is a blessing which constantly waits on good men, even in this world; and wisdom is the author of it. For true piety hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come. So that the honest and virtuous man has the best security for being happy, both here and hereafter.

22. *But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.*

But it is not so with the wicked; they may flourish for a time, grow tall, and spread abroad like a cedar in *Libanus*, yet shall they either be cut down suddenly by the axe of divine justice, or finally be rooted up by the blasting of the breath of his displeasure: So that neither root nor branch shall remain, to preserve the memory of their precarious and short-lived prosperity. The happiness of good and bad men, in this world, has this signal and important difference; that of the righteous is chiefly internal; less visible, but more perfect: The others is only external; more dazzling

dazzling and conspicuous, but never lasting nor sincere. When the good man dies, he passes to a state of more consummate felicity : When the wicked man departs, all his prosperity dies with him ; he exchanges a mere empty shew of happiness, for real and eternal misery. So that his end, whenever it comes, is indeed, a *cutting off from the earth* ; (earth being the only ground in which his happiness can grow) : His exit is indeed a *rooting out*.





The Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. iii.

P R E F A C E.

AS the Morning Lesson contained an invitation to the study and attainment of wisdom, and touched upon some ill effects attending the contrary course; in this chapter the Wise man proceeds, under the same endearing character of a father instructing his son, to set forth the excellence, the infinite value, the certain benefit, and real felicity, of wisdom. He therefore exhorts him earnestly, 1st, To retain in memory the precepts of virtue, or knowledge of the law, in which he was about to instruct him. 2dly, To a faithful practice of those duties, wherein the exercise of true wisdom consists. Some of these he specifies; 1st, In general, under those two great branches of religion, our duty towards GOD, and our duty towards our neighbour; which he summarily, but clearly, defines by mercy and truth. 2dly, He instances more particularly in some special duties of both the tables of the law.

As to the first table, he recommends faith and trust in God, and, in consequence thereof, the practice of humility, self-denial, and piety, with a chearful and ready submission

mission to the authority of his laws, to the wise dispositions of his providence, and the salutary discipline of his correction.

The duties of the second table, which he had before comprehended in one word, Mercy, he more particularly explains, by doing all the good in our power, which either justice or charity demands from us; and, consequently, abstaining not only from all acts of downright injustice and oppression, but from all malignity and envy, all strife and contention, all perverseness and pride of heart, which lead thereto.

The Twenty-second SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. iii.

1. **M**Y son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

2. For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

3. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart:

IT is not enough for us to know the will of God, and understand our duty (as our last lecture recommends), much less is it enough barely to remember it. The disciple of wisdom must not only study and entertain his reason with the excellence and transcendant rectitude of her precepts; but should so contemplate the lovely idea of her graces

and incomparable perfections, as to inflame his heart, and captivate his affections: So warm his desires with the ravishing sweets, and exquisite felicities, she has to bestow on all that diligently seek her, that his heart may burn within him, and grow enamoured of her beauty, as well as her bounty; yea, till every passion of his soul be engaged in the pursuit, and

440 *The* Twenty-second SUNDAY Prov. 3.

speculation be swallowed up of love, and love in fruition.—Worldly wisdom requires a good head; but Divine philosophy, a good heart: Whoso brings that, is ever welcome to her school, and will soon be a great proficient. All may not be able to understand, but all may love, the truth: and this love is the surest way to understand it.—The brain is but the ark for depositing the commandments in; the only proper *table*, for *engraving* them upon, is the *heart*; and *mercy* and *truth* is the sum and substance of them all; *truth* towards God, *mercy* towards our neighbour: This is the whole duty of man. But this we can never perform, except it be inscribed on the *heart*; because nothing but love can fulfil the whole law. This one word Love does more than all the knowlege and study in the world beside.

4. *So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.*

The outward effects of Divine wisdom, appearing in a prudent and well ordered life and conversation, are compared before to an ornament about the neck (ver. 3. and ch. i. ver. 9.)—The internal graces, inscribed on the table of the heart, are visible only to him that wrote them there; who is also the same, that with his own hand engraved his law on the two tables of stone: A conformity of our actions with his law, of our example with our duty, cannot but recommend us to the *favour* both of *God and man*.—While our light without is the true ray and emanation of his light within, it forms that single sight, whereof our Lord speaks: “If thy whole body be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light^a ;” not only engaging the love of God, and esteem of men, but giving us *good un-*

^a Luke xi. 36.

derstanding also, both to enlighten others and ourselves.

5. *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding.*

6. *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

7. *Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*

8. *It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.*

9. *Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase.*

There are three things, which all men agree to be the greatest blessings of life; and these are, 1st, Dexterity and skill in business. 2dly, A sound and healthy constitution of body, to relish, as well as acquire, the enjoyments of life. 3dly, Affluence and plenty of wealth, to supply its wants, purchase its pleasures, and crown our desires. — Now to obtain these advantages, which all the world so eagerly pursue, as the top of human felicity, there is no way so effectual, as a sincere piety, and true virtue. For, first, as to management of affairs, this places all our designs and enterprizes under the immediate conduct and influence of Divine Providence, and thereby secures us against the fraud and craft of others, as well as from the misguidings or prejudices of our own imprudence: — If so be we *trust in the Lord with all our heart, and in all our ways acknowledge him*, for our guide, our guard, and our rewarder, he will not fail *to direct our paths*, and bless our affairs with success, both as to the end and the means. — 2dly, If, in compliance with the dictates of religion, we govern our behaviour by the rules of humility, our passions and appetites by the fear of God, and correct our excesses by the discipline of repentance, the happy consequence will be, *health to our navel, and marrow to our bones*: A sound mind, in a sound body, is the blessed effect, as well as reward, of virtue. — 3dly, As to worldly wealth, true religion, or divine wisdom, is the most likely means of procuring

442 *The Twenty-second SUNDAY* Prov. 3.

curing us the comforts and enjoyments of this life : For it naturally tends to promote all such schemes and measures as are the surest resources of plenty and prosperity, and, at the same time, derives on every such wise and well-concerted design, the favour and blessing of Almighty God.

10. *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*

Let the covetous miser consider this.—Had he but faith enough to believe the word of God, he would soon turn his pursuit after riches into this channel of religion, and find it the most gainful course.—Alms to the poor, and tithes to the Church, are the two ways of honouring God with our substance; and such as are unjust herein, not only rob God and the poor, but themselves.—If they keep back God's tenth, they often lose the other nine parts^b; and, by withholding their alms from the needy, are often reduced to the begging of alms for themselves.

11. *My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD: neither be weary of his correction.*

12. *For whom the LORD loveth, he correcteth, even as a father the son, in whom he delighteth.*

But although religion and true piety have the promise of both worlds, being the most likely, and ever the most lawful, way of promoting even our temporal interests, according to that rule of our Lord's, That if we "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, all these things [the common necessities and comforts of life] shall be added unto us."—Yet, in the general course of Divine Providence, we may not expect an absolute immunity from the usual calamities, and common accidents, of life.—As men, we are liable thereto; as sinners, we deserve them.—If sometimes the Divine justice with-holds the conve-

^b See Spelman, *de non temerand. Ecclesi.*

niencies, sometimes the comforts, sometimes the very necessities, of life; nay, in lieu of them, sends poverty and contempt, pain and sickness, distress and anguish; yea, withdraws his very presence for a season, in the needful time of trouble; yet still we are to remember, it is the LORD, and none other, from whom our sufferings come; that he is our Lord, and we his people; that he is our Father, and we his children; that it is a chastening from God himself, and therefore must be just; a correction from a Father, who *delighteth* in us, and therefore must be kind, and for our good.—“If it be to try our patience, and for the example of others, that our faith may be found, in the day of the Lord, laudable, glorious, and honourable, it will tend to the increase of glory and endless felicity. If to correct and amend whatsoever doth offend the eyes of our heavenly Father, a sincere repentance, with humble submission to his will, will turn it all to our profit, and help us forward in the right way that leadeth unto everlasting life.”—Who so receiveth the afflictions of life with this spirit, and in this light, will not *despise*, but adore, the chastening hand of the Lord: He will not be *weary* of his correction, but rather rejoice when he falls into divers temptations; knowing well, that *whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth*.

13. *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.*

14. *For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.*

15. *She is more precious than rubies: and all the*

The heathen moralists, and their modern servile imitators, make riches, and the good things of this life, to be necessary ingredients in true happiness. But our inspired Wise man places felicity in *wisdom* only, without any express reference to worldly accommodations.—Nay, he makes it consistent with

444 *The Twenty-second* SUNDAY Prov. 3.

things thou canst desire, are not to compared unto her.

16. *Length of days is in her right hand: and in her left hand riches and honour.*

17. *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

18. *She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her.*

with the very want of them, even with adversity itself, and the greatest sufferings of this present life.—Nor consistent with them only, but usually the very consequence thereof.—He had before defined the fear of the Lord to be the beginning of wisdom: — This fear (as grounded on the considerations of God's just, but fatherly, correction, as ex-

pressed in the 12th and immediately preceding verses) he makes the first step to, and happiness the genuine and immediate consequence of, this wisdom: For so he adds, *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth* [not riches, but] *understanding*.—Wisdom may be found, if diligently sought, but cannot be purchased. It is a gift, which cannot possibly be trafficked for; a free-gift, which may be received, but cannot be bought for a price; because, as he goes on, *The merchandise of it is better*, and far more valuable, *than silver or gold*. She is a treasure in herself; her intrinsic worth cannot be estimated: She is *more precious than rubies*, or the finest jewels. And as she is not to be bought for all the money or wealth in the world, so she needs them not, to make her clients happy. Nevertheless, she is not without the attendance of *riches and honour*: They wait on her command, whenever or wherever she sees it prudent to bestow them, or best for us to have them.—How much soever worldly wisdom or power may prefer and esteem them, they are but her slaves and attendants; they are gifts, but of her *left hand* only, of small worth, and far inferior in degree. But her best and most precious gifts are those of her *right hand*, even *length of days*,—to enjoy the felicity she bestows; a felicity as perfect in duration, as in degree! not only

only secure and solid in substance, but eternal in fruition! The pleasure she yields, is ever sweet in the act, and delightful in the end: *Her very ways, are ways of pleasantness, and ALL her paths are peace.*—The life she gives, is often long in this world, but everlasting in the next.—She is now the only *tree of life*, and still grows in the Paradise of God;—but this Paradise is the CHURCH. Here is now no flaming sword to forbid our access; every one that will, may lay hold upon her; and he is the only happy man that doth so.—*She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her.*

What can be too difficult

19. *The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.*

20. *By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.*

21. *My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion.*

22. *So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.*

23. *Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.*

24. *When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.*

for him to know or do, who hath the same wisdom for his guide and defence, by which the Lord made heaven and earth? Who hath the same infinite knowledge to instruct him, by which the depths and secrets of nature are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew?

So our Lord, who is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, tells his disciples: “To you is given “to know the mysteries of “the kingdom of heaven; “but to others in parables.”

So St. Paul affirms (1 Cor. ii. 15.), “He that is spiritual “judgeth all things.”—

“We have the mind of “Christ.”—Moreover this wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, &c. these manifold gifts of God’s holy

Spirit, if we suffer them not to depart from our eyes; if

446 *The Twenty-second SUNDAY* Prov. 3.

if we stedfastly *keep* them in our hearts, and display them in our actions, shall be *life to our souls*, and *grace to our neck*, i. e. shall convey an additional and new principle of *life* to our souls, even the spiritual and divine; shall make the soul “a living soul,” by infusing into it the Divine nature; for God is the life of the soul, as the soul is of the body. Yea, they shall add a gracefulness to our outward behaviour; and be a greater ornament to our lives and conversations, than chains of gold to the *neck*; communicating to our very persons and example a certain reverence and authority, beyond all the riches and honours of the world: Moreover, such safety and security in every stage and state of life, as no accident or malice of men or devils shall be able to destroy, no fraud circumvent, nor cunning surprise.—Nothing shall harm him that walks in wisdom’s ways. No danger is danger to him; his very *sleep* shall be secure: When he *lieth down*, the host of God encamp around his bed. He need not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day. His *sleep* shall not only be safe, but pleasant and *sweet*; not only refreshing his body with comfortable rest, but often ravishing his mind with a foretaste of heaven, in joyous and transporting dreams.—And when his task of life is done, and he lieth down in dust, his *sleep* shall then be *sweet* indeed.—This last sleep shall be his sweetest sleep of all.—Amen, Amen!—Lord Jesu, so be it!

25. *Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.*

26. *For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.*

As if he should say, in confidence of the impregnable security which the religious man is assured of; “Be not afraid then of *sudden fear*, neither of the *desolation of the wicked*, when it cometh.” Come it will, and that suddenly

too, when least expected; and perhaps involve the good man in some measure; but he need not *be afraid*; it shall not hurt him.—To the *wicked* indeed the Divine judgments will prove *desolation*, and their utter ruin; but, to the righteous man, the greatest sufferings are but improvements of his virtues, or a release from his trial: They but purify his dross, or set him free.—What an infinite advantage then has Divine wisdom! It saves not only from all danger, but even from surprise, and casts out every fear, so that nothing can be *sudden* to him, “whose heart is “fixed on God, trusting in him^d.”—And how can it otherwise be, when the Almighty himself is his *confidence* and support?

27. *Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.*

28. *Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.*

After setting forth the excellencies of wisdom, with respect to piety, or the duties of the first table, the Wise man goes on to shew the happy influence of wisdom, with regard to civil life, or the obligations of the second table of the law; and instances, in some particular duties towards our neighbour: 1st, In all acts of justice. 2dly, Abstaining from all acts of injustice; not only paying to all men what is strictly due, whether it be just debts to our creditors, honour and obedience to superiors, help and relief to inferiors, charity and benevolence to all; but also to discharge all our engagements with alacrity and good-will: Not with-holding by delay, much less by fraud, any *good* in our power, *from them to whom it is due*.—It is observable, that this and the following precepts are not only added as necessary qualifications to intitle us to the foregoing privileges, and blessed advantages, of true wisdom, but to ap-

^d Ps. cxii.

448 *The Twenty-second SUNDAY* Prov. 3.

prize all her disciples, that all acts of justice, equity, or kindness, towards our neighbours, of every rank or degree, ought to be done from the heart, as well as in deed, and with the spirit of love and sincerity.—The morality, inspired by this Divine wisdom, is not content to be punctual in observing the rule of conscience and strict justice, but is forward to seek the occasions of good, and even anticipates, rather than puts off, the calls of distress.—In short, it teaches to do all things well [*bona bene*]; whatever good we have to do, to do it, not only with all our might, but in the best manner.—But altho' the virtue or merit of our actions lie in the morality (which is but another word for the right manner) of performing them; the root whence they spring, and which alone renders them acceptable to God, must be the principles of true religion. Morality, or good manners, turns our actions into virtues; but faith and love animate and sublime them into graces.—The duties of the second table are incumbent on all mankind, and not impracticable to any; but they avail not to salvation, without the duties of the first.—Join both together, and they constitute the true wisdom; which always consists in an union of grace and virtue, of faith and works: And what God hath so joined, let no man put asunder.—From the words, *With-hold not good, &c.* St. *Augustine* draws a still more elevated sense, which imports the strictest professors of piety to attend to. “Fastings (saith he), and watchings, and all that can contribute to subject the body to the spirit, serve much to render our prayers acceptable to God. But in these things, let each devout soul do as he can, and according to his ability. Let not him that has less strength, blame or hinder those who have more, and so *with hold the good* they would do. Nor let the stronger press the weak to do more than they can. For even the weak may be said to keep pace with the strong; yea, to perform that very thing in the other, which, in
“himself,

“ himself, he is not able ; if so be he love and ap-
 “ prove that in the other, which his own infirmity
 “ permits him not to do.”

A disciple of wisdom must
 29. *Devise not evil* not only refrain from every
against thy neighbour, seeing injurious action, and the
he dwelleth securely by thee. downright breach of the
 sixth commandment, but
 keep his very thoughts from *devising* any *evil against his*
neighbour. He must not admit into his mind the least
 design of harm, but reject and abhor all temptation
 to oppression and wrong, how promising soever the
 advantage may appear. Especially against one that
dwelleth securely by thee, as a neighbour and a friend,
 inoffensive and unprepared.

Much less should we mo-
 30. *Strive not with a* lest an innocent person, with
man without cause, if he vexatious suits of law, or
have done thee no harm. private quarrels.—Wisdom
 is a loving spirit, and a lover
 of peace ; and can only be found in peace of them
 that make peace.

Another temper of mind,
 31. *Envy thou not the op-* which obstructs the sacred
pressor, and choose none of influence of wisdom, is *envy*;
his ways. not only that malignancy of
 32. *For the froward is* spirit which prompts some
abomination to the LORD: men to mischief and perse-
but his secret is with the cute their neighbour *without*
righteous. *cause*, and when he has *done*
them no harm; but even that

sort of envy, which repines at the prosperity of ill
 men, and is grieved at the success of the wicked and
 unworthy.—Tho’ the heathen moralists allow of this,
 as a just and laudable envy, yet our inspired philo-
 sopher condemns it, as inconsistent with the genius
 and more benign principles of the true wisdom ; not
 only as it puts the mind upon the fret, and leads to a
froward peevish temper, which is an *abomination to*

the Lord; but because it betrays a secret passion for the very thing we pretend to condemn; and even to murmur at Providence, as unjust, as well as unkind, in bestowing those favours on others, which our pride may suggest are more due to ourselves.—Such seeming unequal dispensations may indeed puzzle the unwise, and have often been used as arguments against a Providence: But the true wisdom unveils the *secret* to all her faithful votaries; to all those who to their faith have added virtue, and who crown the soundness of their principles with righteousness of life.—*Her secret is with the righteous.*

33. *The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesteth the habitation of the just.*

34. *Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.*

34. *The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.*

But as to the wicked person, how prosperous soever he may seem in the eye of the world, every good man knows that the secret design of God, is to bring him to destruction; and that his wrath is entailed upon the wicked to blast their prosperity with a *curse*. Nay, their very prosperity is a curse to them. While, at the same

time, his favour rests upon the pious man, to convert his very sufferings into blessings; to crown his lowliness and humility with honour, and glory, and immortality.—This is the sure inheritance of all that are truly wise. Whereas the top of all worldly grandeur, which the vicious man so foolishly pursues, and sometimes attains to, shall end in everlasting *shame* and dishonour.—*The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.*



The Twenty-third Sunday after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xi.

P R E F A C E.

FROM the tenth chapter (where, strictly speaking, this treatise of divine proverbs begins) to the 25th, are contained, more particularly, the theorems of the doctrine of morality; which, under sundry observations concerning virtue and vice, or moral good and evil, may form a full and complete system of divine ethics. — The virtues and vices are, for the most part, set in opposition the one to the other, and compared together; that so the difference, like lights and shades in a picture illustrating each other, the wisdom and beauty of the one, and the folly and deformity of the other, may the more convincingly appear. — Life and death, blessing and cursing, are here set before us, as they are in the book of Deuteronomy; but not with the same awful and tremendous solemnity of a judge pronouncing sentence, but under the more engaging character of a parent instructing his children; and that too in so persuasive a manner, and with such lively colours, that we may, by the evidence of our own senses, our reason, and our interest, be constrained to choose life, to eschew evil, and to do good.

The Twenty-third SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xi.

1. *A False balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.*

ALL injustice whatsoever, not only in commerce and dealings, buying and selling, &c. but every defect in any of the duties

of life, particularly in the social virtues, or obligations of the second table, such as honour, tribute, fear, &c. to whom it is due; all partial returns of love, friendship, gratitude, charity, and mercy, are highly displeasing to God; who is the great judge, and will be the final auditor, of such *false balances*, such *unjust weights*. But the contrary practice of strict justice,—both in the conduct of our affairs, and the discharge of our duties, is what he *delights* in, and will as certainly reward.

2. *When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.*

Here the Wise man, taking occasion, as it were, from the mention of *weights* and *balance*, in the foregoing verse, sets himself to weigh

the virtues, and their opposite vices, one against another, in the scale of wisdom, or true religion; and then pronounces upon them severally.—The virtues, as coming up to the standard, and making the *just balance*, he pronounces to be of real and solid worth, fully answering the pains, or the price, we are at to obtain them. The contrary vices he finds light and worthless, of no value or weight; vain in the expectation, disappointing in the enjoyment, and destructive in the end; deluding the mind with false hopes, unsatisfying fruition, and bitter remorse.

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He begins with the leading and truly cardinal virtue humility, and its opposite vice, pride.—And here, honour being the prize contended for, the word of truth being the law, and wisdom sitting as umpire, the verdict she gives, is this, that the prize of honour be adjudged to the humble man; *shame* and infamy, to the proud.

When pride cometh, then cometh shame.] Note, The literal version of the original is thus,—*pride cometh; then cometh shame.* Which translation, though the sense be much the same, yet it suggests this reflection, that it being the mind of the Spirit, to summon the several virtues and vices before the bar of wisdom, to be tried and weighed in the scale of truth; and a proclamation, as it were, being made (in ver. 1.) that the merits of each should be well weighed, and the sentence pronounced with the most impartial justice; the cryer of the court may be supposed to cry out aloud, *PRIDE cometh*; and the judge, to pass the verdict, in these words,—*then cometh shame*; immediately subjoining,——*but with the lowly is wisdom.* It is not said, the lowly came, or appeared, as presenting himself to be tried; the lowly and humble man is ever modest; but wherever he be, whether present at the bar, or retired and concealed, as diffident of his merit, or his cause, *Wisdom* is with him; *Wisdom* is ever on his side, both *with* him and for him; *i. e.* Christ, the wisdom of God, and Mediator between God and man, is his advocate, and appears for him.—And it is worth notice, as a thing perfectly agreeable to right order (whether we regard the nature of *pride*, which ever affects to assume the first place, or consider the rule of justice, which requires the greatest criminal to be tried first) *pride*, as the head, the author and fomentor of all the other deadly sins, is here brought first to her trial and condemned.—After this comes on the examination and judgment of the rest of her followers and adherents; as also of the opposite virtues, as we shall have occasion to observe,

454 *The* Twenty-third SUNDAY Prov. 11.

in the sequel of our Lesson, together with the reasons, why the virtues are acquitted with honour and rewards; the others cast, and adjudged to the punishments they respectively deserve, and according to their guilt, both in proportion and kind.

3. *The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.*

4. *Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.*

5. *The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.*

6. *The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.*

This will still more plainly appear, if we descend to particulars, and proceed to compare the several species of virtue and vice, together with the effects they produce in their respective votaries. First, Observe them in their dealings, in their troubles, in the common, or the extraordinary, accidents of life; in the present state, or future event, of things; and we shall ever find, that *the integrity of the upright* will always guide them to do the right thing.

The good man stands in no need of trick and cunning

to manage his affairs; his own honesty will prove his best guide, as well as his best policy.—*The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way*; but the very cunning of a crafty knave shall undo him,—*he shall fall by his own wickedness*; shall be taken in his own naughtiness, as in a trap. Secondly, Observe them again in times of affliction, sickness, difficulty, or danger; especially in any public calamity, great judgments, and days of wrath: What will then those *riches profit*, which the worldly miser, with all his pains and cunning, has been heaping together? Will they relieve him, or comfort him, in his trouble? Will they cure a fit of the stone, or the pangs of a wounded conscience? Will they save him from rapine, or rescue him out of the hands of divine justice? Will they not rather aggravate his sorrows, increase his fears, add slings

to every grief, and lay baits for his destruction?—But with the man of virtue it is not so:—His virtues bear him, calm and composed, through the various storms of life; not only deliver him from trouble, but even *from death*;—often from a temporal, but always from that which is eternal. Yea, come death at what time, or manner, it will, virtue makes a way for him to escape. Troubles may attend him so far, but no farther: There he is sure to find a deliverance, and to be eased of his burden. As virtue taught him the happy art to lay up his treasure in heaven; so, at his parting with it here, she secures to him a joyful admission into everlasting habitations.—O divine philosophy! Thou best guide of human life!—O blessed GOD! Who alone art the source and fountain of it.

But death puts a final period to all the gay prospects and expectations of the wicked man. As his hopes extended not beyond this world, they must, of course, determine with his life: And then, whose shall those things be, which his covetousness and injustice have treasured up for many years?

The end of life will shew the true difference between the wicked and the righteous; for then they shall, as it were, interchange conditions with each other. Death will so shift the scene, that the afflicted good man shall then find an end of all his sufferings; and the wicked, the beginning of sorrows. Divine justice will then acquit the righteous, whose virtue it hath been exercising, and put the wicked *in his stead*: So *Isaac* was let go; the ram was caught, and slain in his room: So, the pampered *Dives* succeeded to *Lazarus's* misery and want: He, that in life had his

evil things, is comforted; he, that enjoyed his good things, is tormented.—Nay, so literally do we find this proverb verified in that parable, that, after death, the beggar became the rich man, and the rich man the beggar, suing to that very man for a drop of water, to whom, in life, he had denied a morsel of bread.

9. *An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.*

Next, if we compare hypocrisy and sincerity together, the first may appear fuller of complaisance and professions of friendship; may carry a more specious shew of truth and religion:

But woe to the man that believes such fair appearances. The words of the *hypocrite* are smoother than oil, yet be they very swords, to slay and *destroy* the credulous and unwary.—But *the just*, the plain, and honest man, hath this advantage, that *through knowledge he shall be delivered*;—delivered from being seduced into any dangerous error by such deceitful pretences, or be corrupted^a by the most plausible disguises of an affected sanctity. As the plague seizes none but those who have the seeds of infection in their blood, so none shall fall into mortal errors, but such as are previously tainted with the principles of delusion.—*Through knowledge* of his duty, and of the grounds and principles of sound religion, and the word and will of God, the *just* man shall be secured from corruption; or (if fallen therein) shall be preserved from perishing finally by such snares of Satan. How can he but be safe, when God himself is on his side, “to keep the simple folk by their right, to defend the children of the poor, and to punish the wrong-doer: he shall be favourable to the simple and needy: he shall deliver their souls from false-

^a *Corrupted.*] The original word which we translate *destroyeth*, signifies to *corrupt*, and is so rendered by others.

“ hood and wrong, and dear shall their blood be in
 “ his fight ^b. ”

10. *When it goeth well
 with the righteous, the city
 rejoiceth: and when the
 wicked perish, there is shout-
 ing.*

11. *By the blessing of the
 upright the city is exalted:
 but it is overthrown by the
 mouth of the wicked.*

Again, if we take a view
 of virtue and vice, with re-
 spect to government, and
 compare the good and bad
 man, in their political ca-
 pacity, how great, how re-
 markable is the difference!
 —If a good man be advanc-
 ed to any post of trust, or
 honour, a whole *city* ap-
 plauds the choice: All the

nation *rejoices* in it, as a public blessing, a general happiness; and count it their own interest and concern.—Virtue, when placed in an eminent station, where she has room and opportunity to exert her benefits, and display all her perfections, how vastly superior to vice will all mankind acknowledge her merit! The voice of the people is ever on her side; the case admits of no dispute, nor even a fair comparison: And the reason of so general a voice, in favour of virtue, is obviously this; a general blessing to the whole community attends the administration of good and virtuous men.—But the *mouth* (though not the hands and traitorous actions, yet) the very counsels, and best designed advice of wicked ministers of state, whose maxims and notions of public good are utterly perverted by the prejudice and false reasonings of vice, prove so contrary to the true interest of the nation, as generally to involve it in public calamities. So that the wicked men in power are the most dangerous enemies of the state: Their promotion is ruin, and their ruin a safety to the public.—Commonly there is *shouting* in either case; but it is at the good man's rise, and the bad man's fall.

^b *Psalms lxxii.*

Next

458 *The Twenty-third SUNDAY* Prov. 11.

12. *He that is void of wisdom, despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.*

Next, if we weigh virtue and vice, with relation to society, and that mutual intercourse, which either necessary business, or common conversation, requires between man and man; we shall ever find this signal difference between good and bad men; the latter, being vile and contemptible themselves, are always apt to despise and condemn others.—The consciousness of their own baseness, and want of merit, is their only rule of judging other men. They are too narrow-spirited^c to see the superior excellence of their neighbour; or too proud and envious to own it. Either their want of judgment represents others no better than themselves, or their malice strives to equal them to their own level, by magnifying real faults, and lessening real virtues. So that an ill man is as incapable of friendship, and all the offices of benevolence, as he is destitute of true virtue.—Virtue is the only sure cement and band of society, as well as the sole standard and rule of honour, whereby we can take the just estimate of ourselves and others. Now the good man, bearing in his own breast the bright idea of virtue, and real worth, reveres it where it shines, and promotes its progress, when weak, but aiming to improve. He is too sensible of his own faults, to expect none in others; too generous to expose, much less to *despise*, the defects of his neighbours. His humility is severe only to his own failings, but candid to other peoples; his charity conceals, what he cannot approve; his patience bears what he cannot conceal. Yea, he covereth all things (πάντα σέγει, for so the apostolical expression does properly import^d), like the roof of an house; he keeps all covered and safe that is under his shelter.

^c Heb. Destitute of heart.

^d 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

13. *A tale-bearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit conceal-eth the matter.*

Another vice, as destructive of society, as it is contrary to true wisdom, is garrulity, and betraying of secrets. This destroyeth all trust and confidence between friends, and credit amongst correspondents. 'Tis base in the practice, and pernicious in the consequences; the vilest treachery, and most inexcusable injury (see *Ecclus* xxii. ver. 22, 23.) But a virtuous man is *of a faithful spirit*; he needs no caution, but his own honour, to keep a secret. What is committed to his confidence, he locks up as a sacred deposit; and fidelity keeps the key.—If chance happen to let him into the discovery of a secret, his prudence engages him to conceal, what would not be generous to divulge.—Scandal may reach his ear, but not his tongue; it dies there, for want of vent.

14. *Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*

If tale-bearing prove so great a pest in common life, how much more mischievous must it be to the interests and security of government! That kingdom, or community cannot subsist long, whose *counsellors* want either ability to give *counsel*, or taciturnity to keep it. But a *multitude* of wise and faithful *counsellors* are the best defence and safeguard to any people.—They are the stars that give light and direction to the commonwealth; but God is the hand and the light that governs them.

15. *He that is surety for a stranger, shall smart for it: and he that hateth sure-ship, is sure.*

Fidelity is a jewel very rare to be found, even amongst our intimates and friends; how much more credulous than wise must he then be, who passes his word for a *stranger*! How justly deserves he to *smart* for his unadvisedness and temerity!—Charity must never in-

460 *The Twenty-third SUNDAY* Prov. 11.
intrench upon justice or discretion. The truly honest man takes heed how he involves himself in any engagements, that may make him unjust to his creditors, or injurious to his family.

16. *A gracious woman retaineth honour : and strong men retain riches.*

Nor are we to think that wisdom is the sole prerogative of men: Women also are entituled to share her gifts. From her graces and perfections it is, that their chiefest ornaments and beauty are derived.—Men may glory in their valour, and, by means of a superior strength, secure their *riches* from the power of thieves; they may acquire to themselves, by their bravery, or wealth, the splendid titles of dignity and renown, as peculiar to their sex: But where *honour* is the prize, the female virtues of chastity, and true modesty, is a surer way to win and to wear it, to purchase and to *retain*, than all the boasted courage of the stoutest men. A wise deportment, a reserved look, a modest countenance, an holy and unaffected conversation, cast such beams of glory, such rays of holy reverence, around a truly *gracious woman*, as prove a more impregnable fortress to her honour, than all the arts of human strength and skill to the security of worldly wealth. Her virtue needs no other arms, no other defence: It not only baffles, but prevents, and keeps at a distance, all rude attempts upon her honour.—No force can subdue it, no artifice annoy:

*Bright chastity needs no defence,
No arms, but its own innocence.
Quivers, and bows, and poison'd darts
Are us'd by men, and guilty hearts :
Chaste innocence secure, may rove,
The care of ev'ry power above.*

HORACE.

Com-

17. *The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel, troubleth his own flesh.*

Compare we next the *merciful*, forgiving, and benevolent temper, with the *cruel*, malignant, and vindictive spirit. The man that is possessed of the first, by the kindness that he shews to another, does not only a good action, for which he shall receive a reward from God, but confers a most sensible pleasure, a most grateful satisfaction, a real benefit, on *his own soul*. For nothing can be more agreeable to human nature, than to be humane to others. Acts of kindness and good-will to mankind, take their very name from our common nature; and are also the virtues which do most endear us to one another: They reciprocally exert and attract love. So that he who is actuated by this generous principle of humanity, and universal benevolence, regarding his neighbour as a brother, or himself, and himself as a citizen of the universe, as a member vitally united to, and equally interested in, the good of the whole, may truly be said, in every act of beneficence and mercy, to be good and beneficent *to his own soul*.—But the unmerciful and *cruel* man is no less an enemy to himself, than to the rest of the world. By declining, or refusing, the common offices of humanity or charity, he not only forfeits all merit, or prospect of any help or affection from others, but robs himself of that pleasing reflection, and sweet gratulations of conscience, which constantly attend all acts of love and good-nature. He deprives himself, as well as others, of the benefits and comforts of society; he does violence to his own bowels, as well as to his common nature, by every act of envy or revenge. He is *cruel* to others, but most *cruel* to himself;—*he troubleth his own flesh*.

And this is agreeable to the very nature of things, and to that eternal law, which the all-wise

18. *The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to*

him that soweth righteousness, shall be a sure reward.

wife and most holy Author of nature has ordained, that misery and disappointment shall be the necessary consequence,

as well as just penalty, of sin; and happiness the effect and sure reward of virtue. So that all the means which *wicked* men employ, to compass their ends, as well as all wicked means, which any man shall use to accomplish his design, shall, in the end, prove abortive, and a *deceitful work*; a work that will surely deceive and balk the most promising expectations.

“Take we heed therefore (as an apostle advises) that we be not thus deceived.” How plausible soever the scheme may appear, which worldly wisdom, and wicked policy, suggest to deceive others, God is not mocked, he cannot be deceived; for “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall, of the flesh, reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall, of the spirit, reap life everlasting.”

19. *As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death.*

20. *They that are of a froward heart, are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way, are his delight.*

21. *Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.*

To enforce still further the real and intrinsic difference between moral good and evil, they are set before us in a threefold view. First, As they are in themselves: Secondly, As they are with respect to God (see ver. 20.) Thirdly, As they respect all that practise them (see ver. 21.) As to the first, we here see, that righteousness, or moral virtue (by its necessary and natural consequences) *tendeth to life* and happiness; and must therefore be a solid

and substantial good; it is highly acceptable to God,

even his delight, and therefore sure of his blessing, approbation, and final deliverance; so that whatever troubles it may be attended with in life, it will certainly be freed from them all at last, and crown its votaries with an happy end; yea, will extend its happy influences to their *seed*, and entail a blessing on their posterity.—Whereas vice is, in itself, a real evil; and consequently all that *pursue* it, are pursuing their own misery; they are the necessary authors of their own ruin, and ever meet with a curse in the very enjoyment of what they seek. It is odious and detestable to God, and so can never expect any favour from him; it is contrary to his laws, as well as his nature; and therefore, were all the world combined together, and *hand joined in hand*, to support or to rescue it, it *shall not escape unpunished*.

22. As a jewel of gold in a swines snout, so so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

If we compare the goods of nature, and the goods of grace; what is beauty, in comparison of prudence? Beauty indeed is a blessing, a jewel of gold, a precious ornament: But if virtue and *discretion* be wanting, it loses its value, because it loses its use.—The fairest woman, without wisdom, is no better than a *swine* with a golden ring in its *snout*. Whatever value there may be in the *jewel* itself, it is sullied by folly, and obscured by vice. Virtue adds a brighter lustre to beauty, and makes it still more beautiful; but vice deforms the fairest face, and prostitutes it to the vilest uses, even to rout in the mire and dirt of the foulest sins.

23. The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

Consider we next, the views and *expectations* of good and bad men; how very different are they! Their passions, as they are moved by different springs, so have they very contrary objects in view. Virtue sets the bias

bias of the affections right, and directs the passions of love, *desire*, &c. to those things which are truly virtuous, and *only good*,—good for ourselves, and good for others. But vice quite turns their bent the wrong way; it not only perverts the inclinations to that which is evil, and, in the issue, must terminate in God's *wrath*, and final perdition; but, by degrees, brings men to delight in wickedness, to give themselves up to pride, wrath, envy, &c. and, at length, to a diabolical pleasure in doing all the mischief they can.

24. *There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.*

25. *The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself.*

26. *He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.*

If we draw the parallel between good and bad men, with respect to their economy and management in life, or the goods of fortune, and the goods of grace, we shall find a wide and essential difference. The good man may seem, by his great charities, and liberal distribution of his wealth, to be throwing away his money, to be an extravagant, and a bad husband of what he has. On the other hand, the man that hoards up every

spare penny, and parts with nothing he can save, either to necessity or charity, is, by the world, thought a notable and thriving man. But mark the end, and we shall see how much the very reverse proves to both.—The good man spends freely, and often grows the richer; *he scattereth, and yet increaseth*. His alms, and his bounty, are like the seed that he sows in his ground; they return again with interest, and reward him with a plentiful harvest.—The covetous wretch may hug himself for his frugality; but, like the man that never sows, he shall never reap.—Acts of prudent liberality do often, in their very nature, promote

mote worldly wealth, but the heavenly riches they never fail to increase. Whereas the niggard, by his very covetous and unjust practices, as often brings himself to poverty. This, at least, is certain, the more any man *with-holds* of what he ought to spend, for the benefit of himself and others, still the poorer he is; for no man is so poor as he that does no good with what he hath.

27. *He that diligently seeketh good, procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.*

This containeth a reason of the foregoing observation, and is, in some measure, a repetition of what was said before, ver. 19. and cannot be noted too often; to wit, that the necessary consequences of good and evil are ever of a similar nature with their respective causes. Like other things, they naturally beget their like; good produces what is good, and evil, as naturally, is the certain parent of evil. This we see verified in the different fate of good and bad men; which very frequently happens to them in this world, but will certainly attend them in the next.—*He that diligently seeketh good*, that applies his utmost care and zeal to promote the honour of God, and good of mankind; that is wanting to no duty of virtue and religion, but makes it his whole business to do, as well as to be, *good*; this man takes the surest course to *procure favour*; even that threefold blessing, of peace with God, his neighbour, and himself, than which no compleater happiness can be procured in this world, nor any surer earnest of *favour* in the next.—*But he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him*: He need not be at much pains to find what he is seeking; his very search is a certain sign the mischief is already *come*. Not only the commission, but the very thought, of sin, brings it upon us. “Who so looketh upon a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her

466 *The Twenty-third SUNDAY* Prov. 11.

“ already in his heart ^f,” saith Christ. *Good* indeed requires pains to *seek*; but whoever seeks with care shall find; but evil is as easy to find as to seek.—’Tis but thinking of it with complacence, and it *comes*; the sin and the guilt come before the commission, the punishment follows after. According to that of St. James, “ When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death ^g.”

28. *He that trusteth in his riches, shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.*

All vicious men build their happiness on the accommodations of this life: Without riches, all their pleasures and enjoyments must needs fail. No wonder then to

see them such slaves to mammon, so eager in seeking, so wholly *trusting*, in *riches*. But all their hopes and dependance must necessarily deceive them, being built on so sandy a foundation. *Riches*, without God’s blessing, are ever the most uncertain supports; and he that thinks to rest upon them, is sure of nothing but a *fall*. He can have no real profit or benefit by them; without the divine favour they are but cyphers, and mere noughts; and he that expects happiness in them, or from them, setteth his eyes upon that which is not ^h.—But the godly man, who makes a right use of his wealth, who employs his *riches* as handmaids and helps to virtue, and is just to God, his neighbour, and himself, he is truly happy, as he is truly *righteous*. He turns the very instruments of unrighteousness into a blessing, and *shall* therefore *flourish as a branch*. Such a one resembles the *branch* of a fair and fruitful tree.—First, As he is a useful member of the society he belongs to, both in church and state; not proudly selfish, and addicted wholly to his own private interest, but vitally united to the other branches of the same stock, and deriving

^f Matt. v. 28.

^g Ch. i. 15.

^h Ch. xxiii. 5.

the same common nourishment from one and the same root.—Secondly, He shall continue not only in the same flourishing state with the other living branches of the same tree, by partaking of the same sap, but, in conjunction with them, bears the same good fruit, and communicates them to others.—Christ is the root, the Church the tree, good men the branches, on which the fruits grow, of happiness and immortality.

There are as many ways
 29. *He that troubleth his own house, shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.* of a man's *troubling his house*, and family, as there are errors in œconomy and good management. But there are three grand troublers of family-peace and happiness; namely, vice, perverseness of temper, and imprudence. Whoever, in the government of his family, as master, parent, husband, or dealer, suffers himself to be swayed by any darling vice, prevailing passion, positive humour or whim, more than by virtue, sense of duty, or the dictates of right reason and religion, shall, in the event, find nothing but vexation and disappointment.—'Tis impossible there should be any comfort or good order, when these troublers are harboured in any family. They are like noxious *winds* in the air, that either corrupt or blast every sweet of the domestic life, or break out into storms of rage and contention; or like those subterranean winds which make the earth to quake.—Whatever views such a master may have to the gratifying his pleasure, his spleen, or his humour, all such hopes and expectations shall vanish, and pass away like the *wind*; all his happiness will be dissipated by these storms of his own raising.—*He shall inherit the wind*; this will be his portion.—The best thing that can happen to such a man, is to lose the authority he has not the prudence to exercise aright; and to put himself under the direction and advice of those, who have more judgment and

468 *The Twenty-third SUNDAY* Prov. 11.

discretion; to lay aside the master, and turn *servant* to him that is *wiser of heart*.

30. *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls, is wise.*

The fruit of the righteous, i. e. of the truly virtuous man, is piety and good works. And as these *fruits* are the genuine productions of the *tree of life*, they propagate and produce the same divine fruits in others, where the soil is duly prepared, and the heart honest and goodⁱ. This husbandry is the best, for it is God's^k: 'Tis the wisest employment we can engage in, for it is the most beneficial; it never fails of an ample return. Our worldly gains lessen the stock of others; to communicate of our wealth to others, diminishes our own: But the *winning of souls* is a merchandize that increases our own store, while it enriches others; it secures a treasure to both; a treasure which neither rust nor moth can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal; a treasure, as eternal in its possession, as it is great and inestimable in its value. *Wise* then is he, who deals in *winning of souls*—to Christ: He is indeed wise to salvation; wise to himself, and wise in making others so.

31. *Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.*

This world is the theatre of probation, the stage of trial.—No man is so perfectly *righteous* as to be free from sin; and no sin shall pass unpunished,—either in this world or the next. Divine justice must be satisfied, before mercy can take place. But virtue is not virtue until it hath been tried; and sufferings are the furnace which proves the pure ore, and separates the dross.—No man shall ever be saved, but so as by fire: All our works must undergo the fiery trial.—This is the lot of the righteous, and of the very

ⁱ Luke viii. 15.

^k 1 Cor. iii. 9.

best of men; "In the world ye shall have tribulation¹."—And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear^m?—"If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dryⁿ?"

¹ John xvi. 33.

^m 1 Pet. iv. 15.

ⁿ Luke xxiii. 31.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer

PROVERBS, Chap. xii.





The Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xii.

1. *WHO SO loveth instruction, loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof, is brutish.*

OUR divine moralist goes on to compare good and evil, by setting one in opposition to the other. But whereas, in the foregoing chapter, he chiefly weighed the virtues against the vices, in this he seems chiefly to compare MEN; the good and the bad together.—No two creatures so different as man and man, when differently swayed by the contrary bias of moral good and evil. As we consist of two very different principles, the rational and animal nature, and are compounded of spirit and brute, the good man takes to the way of the spirit, which lies on his right hand, and applies himself to cultivate and improve the soul; to inform his understanding, and search for truth. Therefore he *loveth instruction*, as the proper means to acquire knowledge, and improve his reason.—But the other turns to the left, and, taking a course the very reverse to the good man, he pursues only the dictates of sense, the mere animal and brutal part of his nature; consequently *hates all reproof*, that would stop his wild career, and set him right.—Now, on the comparison, such an one deserves not only the character

character of *brutish* (in opposition to human and rational), but sinks below the very level of beasts, by adding wickedness to his degeneracy, and malice to his fall. Beasts receive not *instruction*, because they apprehend it not; but man degenerated into brute, *hateth* both it, and him that giveth it.

2. *A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will be condemn.*

From generals he comes to particulars; and, in this chapter, dwells chiefly on the opposite characters of the benevolent and the envious person.—In the first place,

and by way of definition, it is necessary to observe, that, by *favour*, we are to understand benevolence or good will; for so the word ^a, in the original, expressly signifies. And this the *good man* is said to *obtain of the Lord*.—Now, what chiefly constitutes the *good man's* character, and is implied in the very notion of goodness, is the good will and *favour* he bears to his neighbour, and to all mankind. It is also proper to observe, that there is a twofold benevolence, which we may call active and passive, reciprocally practised by the good man towards others, and by them again towards him. Good-will begets good-will, and, although this sometimes proves otherwise amongst men, through a prevailing spirit of envy and ingratitude, it never fails of a gracious return from God.—The *good man* shall always *obtain favour* from him.—Benevolence has an attractive as well as a communicative virtue; always acting, often procuring, love for love; often from man; always from God.—But the envious man, whose character consists in malice and wickedness, is made up of hatred and ill-will. He hates, and is hated of all, and is the object of universal odium and detestation. However plausible and fair his actions may appear, his *devices* are ever *wicked*, and bent upon mischief. He may conceal them from the know-

^a Ratson, *Benevolentia*.—So Pagnin.

ledge and censure of men, the more successfully to accomplish his malicious designs; but no cloak shall screen them from the eye and just vengeance of God. The malevolent person, as an hater of all goodness, and a deviser of all wickedness, and the professed enemy of God and man, the Lord will be sure to *condemn*.

No schemes, that are founded in malice and wickedness, shall finally prosper. The man, who pursues them, how subtle and powerful soever he may be, shall never

attain the ends he proposed. He may injure and oppress the innocent for a time, but shall not be *established* himself. The happiness he seeks, shall issue in a curse; a curse both to himself, and to his family.—But the *righteous* man, though spitefully used, and cruelly oppressed; though his branches may be lopped off, nay, though he be cut down, like a tree, by the malice of his enemies, yet *his root shall not be moved*. His afflictions and losses shall turn to gains, his misery to happiness: He shall spring up again more flourishing and fair, from that immoveable *root*; for that root is *CHRIST*.

The chief excellence of a woman, in domestic life, is to promote the honour and happiness of her *husband*. If she be *virtuous*, she is to him as a *crown* of glory, his joy, and his crown, as the Apostle's expression is ^b on a like occasion. But if she be given to any infamous vice, lazy, loud, or immodest, she not only makes him hang down his head for shame, but is like an incurable disease to him, and *as rottenness in his bones*,—that he never can have any ease or rest.

^b 1 *Thess.* ii. 19.

5. *The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.*

6. *The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.*

7. *The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand.*

As the first bad property of envy is wickedness, or a delight in evil, the next is craft and fraud to deceive and undermine. The very advice of the *wicked* man is treacherous, and intended to betray: His *counsels* are *deceit*, and his *words*, how fair and plausible soever they appear, *are to lie in wait for blood*. Whereas the good man is the very reverse:

His *thoughts* and his actions are all of a piece. He always means well: The first conceptions, and most sudden *thoughts* of his heart, *are right*; his words are sincere, and his actions helpful and kind. No employment pleases him better, than to counsel and instruct the ignorant, to comfort the afflicted, and *deliver* the oppressed from falsehood and wrong.— And, as the intentions of good and bad men are directly contrary, with respect to others; so shall the issue be, with respect to themselves. By the just retribution of Divine Providence, the intended mischief of the wicked shall fall on his own pate, to *overthrow* and destroy him; while the beneficence of the good man shall crown him with blessings, and intail the favour and protection of Heaven on him and his posterity. *The house of the righteous shall stand.*

8. *A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.*

As the good man is benevolent, so is he also prudent and wise. While the ends he pursues are beneficial to all, and the means he uses are honest and fair, he cannot fail of praise and good-will: He *shall be commended according to his wisdom*. But malice (or delight in evil) is not only hateful, but base and contemptible. While the envious man is bent upon mischief,

474 *The Twenty-third SUNDAY* Prov. 12.

his malice doth often outstrip his wit. Yet, though impotent to effect his wicked purposes, nevertheless so *perverse* in his heart, that no considerations can divert him from them.—This perverseness of temper is a constant effect of envy, and tends to make the man, that is subject thereto, as generally *despised*, as the malignancy of his actions makes him hated and abhorred.

9. He that is *despised*, and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.

Some render this (and seemingly with more propriety) *He that is despised, and is servant to himself* [or is his own servant], is better, &c. Whence we may

learn, by comparing this with what is mentioned in the foregoing verse, that there are two kinds of contempt, which are widely different, according to the conceptions men have of the causes from whence they flow. Some things are in themselves shameful, and derive contempt from the nature of the action: Other things are so in opinion only, and not in themselves. The cause of the first is in the person *despised*; the cause of the latter, in the person *despising*, and the wrong judgment he makes.—Now, no actions are truly shameful, but what are sinful. This the Wise man had pointed to before, where he tells us, that *he, that is of a perverse heart, shall be despised*. But here he seems to hint, that the world, for the most part, judges otherwise, and throws contempt more generally on poverty, and the want of worldly goods and conveniencies: Despises the man that is poor, how honest and industrious soever he may be, and counts it a mean and shameful thing for a man to work for himself, and be *his own servant*, because it is a mark of poverty. But, as poverty is no disgrace in itself, so neither is the contempt it meets with any real evil. Nevertheless, this contempt of the world is so great a bugbear to some, that they are ashamed to take to any manual labour, or to work for their liv-

ing;

ing; that they chuse rather to want bread, than, by their neighbours, be thought poor: To avoid an imaginary evil, they run into a real one.—How much happier, as well as wiser, of the two, is he, that is not ashamed to earn his bread with his own hands, if need be; or do any servile work for his necessary occasions, than he *that honoureth himself* by an affected air of gentility, and yet *lacketh bread*, and the common necessities of life.

10. *A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies^c of the wicked are cruel.*

The kind and benevolent temper of the good man, in his intercourses with mankind, hath been observed before on ver. 2. and chap. xi. ver. 17. But here the

Wise man takes notice of a tenderness and benignity of spirit, which shews itself towards the dumb and brute creatures; that *a righteous man regardeth even the life of his beast*. From whence we may infer, that it is a laudable thing, yea, a branch of mercy, to exercise kindness towards brutes; that so we may keep at the greater distance from acts of cruelty towards men. Nay, not only so, but that such tenderness is an act of real justice and piety. The truly righteous man considers not so much the property he may have in the cattle or beasts which belong to him, as the original and supreme right which God hath over them, and all created beings: That, as God alone hath given life, none but he hath a right to take it away from the meanest animal that is. The power, which man hath of this kind, is solely by donation from God, in that royal grant, when he gave him dominion over the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea^d. But, in strictness, none but the *righteous man*, the faithful subject and servant of God, hath a just right to this dominion; for he gave it to man in his state of in-

^c Heb. The bowels. ^d Gen. i. 28. and renewed chap. ix. 2.

nocence; and then renewed it to us in *Noah*, on the treaty of reconciliation and grace. This right the good man exercises with tenderness to the animal, and with humble regard to the Divine Proprietor; as using, not abusing, his Lord's goods. And, as lord *Bacon* excellently observes, "This compassion
 "and tenderness, which extends itself to these brute
 "creatures, which are, by divine ordination, subject
 "to man's command, hath some analogy with that
 "of a prince towards his subjects, whom he ought
 "to govern with gentleness and mercy.—Nay further, it is certain, the worthier any soul is, the
 "larger is its tenderness and compassion. It looks
 "on itself as a noble portion of the universe; is
 "kindly affected towards inferior creatures, in regard
 "to the communion there is between them, as creatures of the same common Maker. And that this
 "was also the will of God, we find, under the old
 "law, many precepts concerning this tenderness towards the brutal kind; which were not so much
 "merely ceremonial, as institutes of mercy. Such
 "as that of not eating flesh with the blood in it."—Thus the great lord *Bacon*. And hence, we may add, it became a part of religion, that good men, in the most antient times, were so tender of the lives of their beasts, that they killed none but in sacrifice to God; nor eat any flesh, but what had first been offered up to him.—And although the privilege over the lives of brutes be more enlarged to Christians, we are not to be prodigal thereof: We ought to remember, that the permission is granted to necessity, and not for luxury and intemperance.—But the *wicked* man hath a spirit the very opposite to that of the *righteous*: His very mercies are cruel: His bowels^f, like his consci-

* *Eat no flesh, but, &c.*] That the antients eat no flesh, but what was first sacrificed to God, appears from *Homer*, and the heathen writers, as well as from the Scriptures. See note Vol. II. page 150.

^f So the *Heb.*

ence, are seared into hardness; are so far from tenderness, or feeling the distress of his fellow-creatures, that he takes pleasure in the acts of cruelty. He has put off all humanity, as well as pity; while the good man shows mercy to his beast, the wicked is a mere savage to man^g. Or, if he practise any mercy, it is only to the wicked like himself; and all such mercy is a cruelty to others. Nay, all acts of mercy, indulgence, or love, which are not governed by true piety, are, in their issue, unhappy, and acts of real cruelty and unkindness.—The very friendships of ungodly men are fatal; their fondness to children, their caresses and courtesies, are more truly hatred, than kindness and love, or good-will.

St. *Paul* saith to the Church, “Ye are God’s husbandry^h.” Every member is a labourer herein; yea, is himself the tillage, which he is to cultivate and improve. And our Lord tells

us, that the seed is the word of God, and the heart, the soilⁱ.—When man fell from God, we read, “the ground was cursed^k,” but the heaviest part of the curse fell upon this earth, the heart of man, so that it produced nothing of itself, but thorns and thistles, and weeds.—Now the only right way of *tilling* this land, is first, to root out the briars and thorns, that is, the vices and corruptions of the heart; to clear away those stones and weeds; to plow up the fallow ground by mortification, and sincere repentance; and then to sow the divine seed.—Such wise cultivation shall not fail of a plentiful harvest, an abundant supply of *bread*; that is, of the graces and virtues of the Son of God, who is the living bread, that came down from heaven^l. But he that attends not

^g *Homo homini lupus.*

^k Gen. iii. 17.

^h 1 Cor. iii. 9.

ⁱ John vi. 41.

^l Matt. xiii.

478 *The* Twenty-third SUNDAY Prov. 12.

to this important husbandry, but neglects the ground of his own heart, is more fatally foolish than that husbandman, who spends his time in idleness among *vain persons*, which should be employed in tilling his land.

12. *The wicked desireth the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.*

It is no uncommon observation, that, if two ways lead to any secular advantage, the *wicked* man ever chuseth the worst; preferring the knavish and base, though often more difficult and uncertain, before the fair and honest way, though easy and sure. It is the curse of wickedness, not only to mistake a right course, but to *desire*, and delight in, that which is wrong.—And what is the *net of evil men*, which the wicked *desireth*, but that craft and knavish policy, which they make use of to attain their ends; that vile dishonest cunning, which they employ to outwit and defraud the plain innocent man?—And too many such there are, who, in their bargains and dealings, think it no crime, but a commendable thing, to over-reach and deceive.—But the *righteous* man acts upon a quite different principle; a principle of honour and honesty, which, like a *root*, hid within, and not seen, yet sound, and of a generous stock, *yieldeth fruit*, both wholesome to the taste, and fair to the eye.—'Tis no less pleasant, than safe, to deal with an honest man.

13. *The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.*

Have we but patience to wait the issue of this different practice of bad and good men, and we shall often see this observation verified. The wicked man, while he is laying his traps to catch men, is often taken in his own net; he is *snared by the transgression of his lips*: His own tongue causeth him to fall. While the *just* man, whom he had drawn into his *net*, is set free, and
cometh

cometh out of trouble.—The snare is broken, by the knave's overacting his part, and the honest man is delivered.

14. *A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth, and the recompence of a mans hand shall be rendred unto him.*

This gives some reason of the foregoing proverb, and teaches how much the success of our affairs depends on the use of the tongue. For what is the *fruit* of our *mouth*, but the good or bad effects of our conversation and discourse? He that bringeth forth good *fruit*, that is, doth good to others by wise advices wholsome reproof, or pious instruction, shall reap abundant satisfaction; shall taste the sweets of his own good fruits.—Another way of doing good is by the *hand*, in helping the poor, relieving the distressed, working the thing that is honest in any calling or profession. This also is sure of a blessing, even a double blessing; not only most commonly of success in what we undertake, but of a sure *recompence* from God, for whose sake, and in obedience to whom, it is done.—Charitable actions, and labours of love, are ever the most profitable; they yield the largest return. This traffic with Heaven is always sure of more than an hundred fold.

15. *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel, is wise.*

16. *A fools wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame.*

Here *fools* are compared with wise men. By *fools*, in the language of our divine moralist, is to be understood vicious persons. And, as there are divers kinds of folly, two sorts are here particularly noted as great failings. First, That which is attended with obstinacy and self-conceit; and, Secondly, That which is easily provoked to anger, and gives way to every hasty fall of that boisterous passion. The first kind (that of conceitedness) is a most unhappy temper; because, by refusing to hearken to

480 *The Twenty-third SUNDAY* Prov. 12.

to any good counsel and advice, it becomes incurably blind, and must inevitably perish.—The other, by its rashness, hurries on the very shame and misery it pretends to prevent.—Whereas the good man is so *wise* (because he is humble) as to listen to advice; and so prudent, as to receive a just reproof with thanks, and all injurious treatment with patience.—Hereby he *covereth shame*, and gaineth honour.

In these seven verses are

17. He that *speaketh truth, sheweth forth righteousness; but a false witness, deceit.*

18. *There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.*

19. *The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*

20. *Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy.*

21. *There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.*

22. *Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.*

23. *A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.*

advice, ver. 18.; lyes in his ordinary conversation, ver.

contained sundry observations concerning the good and bad man, with respect to the tongue and the heart. The good man hath both under government; both employed to the benefit of others; both agreeing together, and always true. Whenever he speaks, especially in matter of testimony, he *speaketh truth, and sheweth forth righteousness*. That is, he constantly acts and speaks according to the rule of justice. And, as the hand of the dial or clock is true to the sun, so is his heart and tongue to the truth, both to think and declare what is just and right.—But a bad man, like a bad clock, is never true. Be it evidence or advice you seek, you will meet with nothing but *deceit*; such (for instance) as falshood, or prevarication in his testimony, ver. 17.; sharp and bitter words in his

ver. 19. ; treachery in all his schemes and designs, ver. 20. But, if the conduct of these two sorts of men be so widely different, so is the fate that attends them. For so the Wise man adds, ver. 21. ; *No evil shall happen to the just* : He may perhaps suffer at first, by the tongue and malice of the wicked, for his plain dealing, and speaking the truth ; but this shall not hurt him ; because no *evil* is a real evil, but what is moral. Outward evils are not evils to the good man : Nothing can harm us, but sin : Keep we clear from that, and it will not be in the power of men or devils to do us hurt.—On the contrary, *the wicked shall be filled with mischief*. His wickedness is a poison that infects all he does ; turns every good into an evil ; his very blessings into a curse ; his successes into misfortunes : So that, after all his wit and cunning, his plots and devices, the end will be to find himself, and all his projects, *filled with mischief*, and terminate in confusion, disappointment, and misery.—The 22d verse gives us the reason, why truthth so conducive to happiness ; and therefore, on the comparison, so infinitely preferable to falsehood ; even because God hateth the liar, and loves the honest dealer ; consequently, will assuredly blast the one, and bless the other.

In the 23d verse is contained a wise observation, shewing the reason why the good man hath his tongue under government ; and why the wicked hath not : Even because the one is *prudent*, the other a fool. The first observes both time and order : He knows both when to speak, and when to be silent ; what to say, as well as how : His heart governs his tongue ; his tongue contradicts not his heart. And, though, he hath knowledge and good skill in matters of religion, business, or learning, he is not forward to shew it ; he makes no ostentation of his talents, but rather *conceals* them, till prudence directs, and the proper occasion presents.—And his prudence consists in the following particulars : First, He has too humble an

opinion of his own abilities, not to be sensible of his ignorance in many things. Secondly, Having learned from the Gospel, that truth is a divine seed, an heavenly pearl, he is persuaded it ought to be dispensed with the profoundest reverence, and never to be cast before the unworthy^m.—Thirdly, He considers, that knowledge is apt to puff upⁿ, and therefore fears, lest, in communicating its light to others, he should, through pride, darken and impair his own.—Fourthly, He knows, that all the knowledge we have, is the gift of God; and ought, therefore, to be employed to his glory, and the good of souls; and that too, as his Holy Spirit shall minister the occasion, and hath prescribed the order.—On the contrary, The heart of the fool *poureth out foolishness*: His heart is full of folly, like a foul spring casting up mire and dirt, and his tongue like the spout that poureth it out. He hath no regard to time or truth, order or decency: Whatever comes uppermost in the thought, *pro*-blabs it out with the tongue. Faith and grace are the Christian's reason; but, where these are wanting, the more refined a man's parts are, he is only so much the greater fool. His reason (or what he calls so, and so boastingly sets up for) is not reason, but passion, prejudice, or humour. These are the spring of all his actions and opinions. And when he has advanced his lusts into the throne of reason, and called them by that venerable name, as the idolater calls his image his god, he grows fond and conceited of his own errors, both in judgment and practice.—And, if he hath wit to defend them, he *pours out* a flood of idle or profane speculations in a torrent of words, which, like false eloquence in a wrong cause, serve only to confirm the delusion. By this unhappy fallacy he imposes on himself, though not on others; gets above all conviction, rejects all the efforts of truth and right reason, in favour of his own reason

^m *Matt. vii. 6.*ⁿ *1 Cor. viii. 1.*

falsely so called; and acting over the fable in the poet, instead of a goddess, embraces a cloud°.—Of such men speaks the pious Archbishop *Leighton*: “The
 “ less knowing they be, the more confident they are
 “ that they know all; and the more swelled with a
 “ conceited sufficiency of their model and determina-
 “ tions of things, both dogmatical and practical;
 “ and, therefore, are the most imperious and ma-
 “ gisterial in their conclusions, and the most impa-
 “ tient of contradiction, or even of the most modest
 “ dissent^p.”

24. *The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.*

25. *Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it sloop: but a good word maketh it glad.*

26. *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth him.*

27. *The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.*

There are two kinds of diligence, and two kinds of sloth, which the candidate of divine ethics is here called upon to attend to; namely, that of the body, and that of the mind. First, There is a diligence, and likewise a sloth, of the *hand*. The former not only maketh rich (as we are told, chap. x. ver. 4.), but, as here, it raises a man to honour and authority;—it shall *bear rule*. Whereas he, that is *slothful* in business, and *dealeth with a slack hand*, not only becometh poor, but shall be degraded to a state of slave-

° Ver. 17. *Embraces a cloud.*] This alludes to the fable of *Ixion*, who is said to have embraced a cloud instead of *Juno*; for which impious attempt he was condemned to be fastened to a wheel in hell, and turned about continually.

The moral of which fable imports, That divine vengeance takes cognizance of evil designs, as well as evil actions; and that by the very light of nature it appeared very just, that wicked thoughts and intentions should not only meet with disappointment, but actual punishment.

^p Sermon ii. p. 28.

ry, and be *under tribute*.—Thus diligence is rewarded, and thus sloth is often punished in a civil sense, and by the ordinary disposition of Providence in this world. Now this kind of diligence, or bodily activity, which we usually call industry; and this kind of sloth, which is commonly called laziness, we meet with again in the 27th verse. But there, the vice, and its opposite virtue, are represented in a light somewhat different; yet still agreeing in this, that both are attended with suitable awards: Indigence and want is the usual fate of such sluggishness, as refuseth to labour; affluence and plenty the portion of such industry, as taketh due pains for its support.—*The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting, (even because he hunted not for it), but the substance of a diligent man is precious.* It cost him dear to get it, and he husbands it accordingly, as a purchase earned by his sweat and labour, and therefore is valuable and *precious*.—Secondly, As to the other kind of diligence and sloth, to wit, that of the mind, we have it set before us in ver. 25 and 26.—The common tribe of moral writers, when they treat of sloth, as one of the deadly sins, call it by the name of *Acedia* and *tristitia*. Of this our Lesson gives us the *English*, styling it *beaviness in the heart*, ver. 25. This is properly the sloth of the mind; a listless, careless, indolent temper, when the faculties and powers of the soul are either wholly unactive, or fruitlessly employed. The usual cause of this is a kind of despondency, when the heart, through blind security, or a base cowardice and diffidence of success, neglects all the necessary means of help, and sinks into a sullen and mopeish dejection of spirit. This, in spiritual concerns, is called despair. And, when once a man hath thrown off all hopes of success, and, in consequence thereof, all endeavours and means, as useless and vain, no wonder the heart should be made to *stoop*; that is, be heavy and sad. But it *stoops*, or lies down, under a burden of its own making, and like the poor hypochondriac,

chondriac, never strives to get up, because it fancies it hath no strength or power to rise.—And yet, we are told, that *a good word maketh it glad*: A word of comfort from a friend may indeed revive a drooping heart under the common calamities of life: But what *good word*, but that which is Almighty, as well as *good* and gracious, can turn that heaviness into joy, which has lost all hope, and all sense of joy?—None but his, who hath said, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise “from the dead” (from the death of sin and sloth), “and Christ shall give thee light^a.”—The very essence of despondency is sadness, and joy the only cure. But this cure is one of the miracles of grace; a change in the heart so absolute and intire, none can work but He, who made and fashioned, knows and sees, the heart of man. Christ wrought all his wonderous cures with a *word*; yea, he himself is the *word*, that comes with healing, even health itself, to cure all the distempers of the soul of man: And, to a wounded spirit, how *good* must the *word* of glad tidings be, from this sovereign physician of the soul, which, at once, expels its sorrows, and infuses joy.—Howbeit the success of this heavenly medicine depends on our own application and use.—Herein, therefore, the righteous man (*i. e.* he that doth the thing that is right) *excelleth* his neighbour: He places his virtue and his wisdom in following the commands of God; he prefers his will to his own; he is diligent to pray for, and to pursue, the directions of Heaven, and therefore cannot fail of attaining his end; even all that is *excellent*. But whoso follows only his own ways, as the sinner, and especially the slothful man, doth, however he may flatter himself with prospects of happiness, he is only strengthening his own delusion. He still runs on in a round of error; and, by rejecting the better advice of others, proves his own seducer. And thus it is, that *the way of the wicked seduceth them*.

^a Eph. v. 14.

486 *The* Twenty-third SUNDAY Prov. 12.

28. *In the way of righteousness is life, and in the path-way thereof there is no death.*

This is, as it were, the sum and substance of our Lesson, and a proper conclusion of all that we have been taught in the foregoing maxims of divine Philosophy; namely, that religion, and an holy conversation, is the only sure and infallible way to happiness. So excellent, and so far beyond every other scheme, is this *way of righteousness*, that not one of all the actions and pursuits it engages us in, shall ever issue in misery and disappointment.—*In the path-way thereof there is no death.*—But (saith the Gospel, seconding our royal moralist) “All things shall work together for good to them that love God.”

To conclude: We may close both our Morning and Evening Lessons with the words of the wise son of *Sirach*: “Good is set against evil, and life against death; so is the godly against the sinner, and the sinner against the godly.”

† Rom. viii. 28.

† Eccles xxxiii. 14.





The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xiii.

P R E F A C E.

THIS Lesson begins, as the foregoing chapter doth, with an admonition about receiving instruction; noting it as a mark of wisdom in a child to pay due regard to the reproof of a parent; and of an abandoned temper, to scorn and reject it.

And as he did there, so here again the wise man gives fresh advices concerning the right use and government of the tongue, and recommends industry and diligence. These virtues, tho' not so specious as many others, are yet the chief springs of all temporal happiness. He bath also several observations, not much different from what he made before, of the real advantage which the righteous have over the wicked, even in this life. To illustrate this, as he doth in many instances, and to shew wherein the true happiness of man consists, with respect to this world and the next, seems to be the main drift and design of this Lesson.

The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xiii.

1. *A Wise son heareth his fathers instruction: but a scorner beareth not rebuke.*

IT is a sign of wisdom, and the best mark of respect and obedience, to submit to the reproof, as well as advice, of our superiors, especially of parents and instructors. But the *scorner*, he that hath lost all sense of shame for sin, all honour and regard for virtue and religion, is like the deaf adder; he stoppeth his ear to the voice of every charmer, charm he never so wisely, and will not so much as hear advice: Either he keeps out of the way of good counsel, and shuns the hearing the *rebuke* he deserves; or else, as it commonly happens, such a one is given over by all good men, as a reprobate person, whom all advice is lost upon, and therefore as unworthy, or incurable.—*Scorn* is the highest degree of pride and obstinacy, proceeding from a seared conscience, as well as a vain heart. And when once a man is past *feeling* (as the apostle expresses it)^a, no wonder he should be past *bearing* too.

2. *A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.*

The soul, as well as the body, hath its proper organs of sense; it hath its mouth, eyes, ears, &c. to taste, see, and hear; that is, to discern and judge of intellectual objects. And happy the man, whose animal and rational faculties are directed alike to the same good

^a *Ephes.* iv. 19.

end, and unitedly concur in the actions of piety and virtue. The good man, whose mouth and thoughts have been employed in wise discourse, wholesome instructions, pious conversation, seasonable reproof, shall taste and enjoy the blessed and happy effects of it. His soul shall relish a sweetness in the reflection of the good he hath done.—No *fruit* is so delicious as that which grows on the tree of life, and is produced by the wisdom of the tongue.—On the contrary, none so bitter, as the folly of rash language, or the violence of a passionate unmortified spirit.

It is therefore of the greatest consequence to a man's happiness, that he keep a careful watch over his tongue. He that doth so, secures his life from infinite troubles, which an evil, indiscreet, or unbridled, tongue exposes to.—He that is of a wrathful spirit should often join in *David's* prayer: "Set a watch, " O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of " my lips ^b."

3. *He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips, shall have destruction.*

The soul of a slothful man is doomed to a double curse, fierce desires, and feeble hands. His passion is inflamed by the sense of his wants, but he hath not the

heart to take pains for their supply. He coveteth with the same greediness ^c the miser doth; but is too lazy to acquire by labour, what the other wants power to enjoy. The *slug-gard* and miser are both in want; the one, of what he hath; the other, of what he hath not: The one hath what he enjoys not; the other has nothing to enjoy; and consequently is the more wretched of the two.—Sloth is a kind of hell, which the *slug-gard* kindles in his own breast; to wit, unex-

^b *Pf.* cxli.

^c See *Prov.* xxi. 25, 26.

tinguishable desires, and remediless want. He hath the torment of fruitless wishes, and hopeless impotence: And what can be a greater misery than this? —But the fruit of diligence is the reverse; it brings not only a competence, but abundance; not only satisfies, but makes *fat*.—To desire and have, is the top of human felicity; and this happiness the man of true diligence enjoys. His desires are moderate, bounded by reason and religion; his industry, pious and unwearied; where he feels a want, he neglects not the proper means for its supply; where his own strength and endeavours fail, he is sure of help from on high, and therefore can never lack any manner of thing that is good, being intitled to that blessing by a Divine promise: “Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find^d.”—The case is the same as to spiritual riches: The *soul of the sluggard* desireth pardon and peace, grace and virtue; and yet *hath nothing*: He receives them not, because he takes no pains, nor uses the necessary means to obtain them. Whereas the *soul of the diligent*, who duly labours for them, shall be *made fat*; shall abound in all these good things; shall be fed with the bread of life, the heavenly manna, and be satisfied therewith.

5. *A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.*

A truly honest man detests and avoids all manner of lies: His thoughts are without guile, his words without deceit, and all his actions without fraud. His intentions are as free from all bye-ends, as his conversation and his friendship from craft and hypocrisy. He has no self-interests to serve, therefore needs no mask to disguise his designs. He hateth all double-dealing, as vile and ungenerous: He is one, in every part of his character, and always the same.—But every *wicked man* is a liar of course: When he forsook vir-

^d *Matt. vii. 7.*

tue, he forsook the truth, and hath no other rule of his actions, but shifting and falshood;—first, to compass his ends; and then, to conceal the baseness of his designs. He is forced to borrow the cloak of virtue, or religion, to hide the deformity of his crimes: And this, for a time, may screen them from the eyes of men; but still his own guilty heart reproaches his villainy; his conscience upbraids his treachery; he cannot help thinking, and calling himself a knave. But if the vizor fall off, or the disguise prove too thin to cover the cheat, he presently grows *loathsome* and odious to the world, and meets with that universal *shame* and contempt, which he justly deserves.

6. *Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner* ^c.

Honesty therefore, and true virtue, is not only the best policy, but the best guide, in all incidents and affairs of life. As it proposes but one end, it keeps

to one way: Its path is straight and sure, and leads directly to the point it aims at.—But vice is its own ruin; it *overthrows itself*; its pretence is happiness, but goes out of the way to seek it: Its hopes are vain, its promises delusive, its pleasures unsincere, and its end destruction. The very means the sinner uses to accomplish his designs, prove the certain *overthrow* of himself and them.

7. *There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.*

There are hypocrites both in common life and religion; therefore no trusting to outward appearances. He that affects to make a shew of greater wealth or worth than he is really possessed of, may,

for a time, gratify his vanity, and deceive the world; may cheat others, but he cheats himself most: If he rob them of the use of his talents, and God of the

^c Heb. Overthroweth sin.

glory, he doubtless will be the greatest loser; for he shall forfeit both principal and interest at the great day of retribution. They were given him to occupy for his own and others good, and principally for the honour of him that gave them; but, "Wisdom that is hid, and a treasure hoarded up, what profit is there in them both? A man that hideth his folly is better than he that hideth his wisdom," saith the son of Sirach, *Ecclus* xx. 30.

8. *The ransom of a mans life is the chief: and this the life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke.*

Of all temporal blessings life is the chief: and this the poor man enjoys with more safety than the rich; and therefore, in that respect, is the happier of the two. Wealth may procure us the honours and pleasures of life, but life itself it exposes to continual hazards. Envy or covetousness are ever plotting against the rich man; so that he is often obliged to pay all that he is worth for the *ransom of his life*. Consequently, in the esteem of the greatest miser that is, the security which attends a poor estate, is far greater than that of a plentiful fortune. And this is one reason why the rich miser, spoken of in the foregoing verse, affects to make himself poor, and puts on the appearance of want. Whereas the poor man, he that is really poor, *heareth not rebuke*; his poverty is the safeguard of his life; he may sleep securely with his doors open; he may sing before the thief; yea, he is both safe from the danger and the very fear of loss, who hath nothing to lose, and from the rebuke and reproach of niggardliness, who hath nothing to give or to spend.

9. *The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.*

But if we take an estimate of human happiness from the morals of men, and the riches of the mind, how superior an advantage has virtue to vice! True virtue is not only a treasure that endangers not, but is the
securest

securest treasure and blessing of life; it can neither be taken from us, nor we from it. 'Tis a *light* that casts a splendor around us, and joys within us; 'tis a happiness entire and complete, not only in the opinion of others, who behold it, but is sweetly felt and tasted in ourselves, and shed abroad in our hearts. All suffrages, both of the world and our own consciences, concur to pronounce it the true and only perfect felicity of man.—But the happiness of vice is no more than a *lamp* is to the light of the sun: It may have some glimmerings of light, some faint shadow of happiness, but hath nothing solid or lasting in it. Few indeed are so wicked but they have a *lamp*, some shew or appearance of virtue; and so far only are they happy as that appearance goes. But death puts an end to both; their life, and their *lamp*, are extinguished together.—No light, but that which is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, can carry us to the regions of bliss. And this is *the light of the righteous* here spoken of; a light which cannot be put out by affliction or death; but rather is still more brightened by both; still shines more and more to the perfect day, and therefore *rejoiceth* for ever.—Lord! give us this *light*, and take what else thou pleasest away.

Pride is at war with all the world; hath neither rest in itself, nor peace with others; therefore can never be happy here: It was cast out of heaven for its sedition there; and therefore can never be admitted there again, to be happy hereafter. But an humble frame of mind, which disposes it to submit to the judgment and advice of others, is an argument that wisdom is there; and where she is, there cannot but be happiness and peace.

10. *Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well-advised is wisdom.*

494 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 13.

II. *Wealth gotten by vanity, shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour^f, shall increase.*

In all acquisitions there ought to be what the law calls a valuable consideration; that is, an equivalent, or due proportion, between the thing to be acquired, and the price; or, in other words, between the end and the means used. However transitory then wealth in itself may be, yet, as it serves to many useful and excellent purposes, *vanity* can be no sufficient price, or valuable consideration, for riches. And to get them by unfair means, such as lying, cheating, gaming, or whatever ways are contrary to law, or good conscience, whether it be forgery in giving false notes, or refusing to satisfy or secure just debts, is, by the Wise man, justly stiled *vanity*. It may, for a time, seem to prosper; but the mask cannot hold long. Both God and man arm themselves against a knave. What he has therefore heaped together by fraud and dishonesty, is often torn away from him again by the hand of justice, or blasted with a curse from heaven.—But where *wealth* is the purchase and earnings of honest industry and *labour* (and that of the *hand* is generally the most innocent, if not the most thriving), it seldom fails to *increase* the store; both God and man uniting to encourage and reward the diligent and industrious *hand*.—It is to such only the wealth of a nation is owing. But *vanity* was ever an extravagant: Whatever it gets unduly, it spends as idly. If the rich consult it in their expences, it will soon diminish their substance. And however some may value themselves on their lands and possessions, it is to the husbandman and trader they are beholden for the profits. As the *hand* of the labourer first made them rich, so is it a constant fund and supply to their wealth.—Even “the king himself is served by the field,” *Eccles.* v. 9.

^f *Heb.* With the hand.

12. *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.*

The happiness of men in this life depends chiefly on the disposition and turn of the passions. For instance, *hope*, which is the expectation of some good we desire to enjoy, is very pleasing, while it flatters the mind with a prospect of success; but if any obstacles fall in the way, to disappoint, or even *defer*, our hope, it *maketh the heart sick*, fills it with anxious and uneasy thoughts, embitters every other sweet of life, and renders every present enjoyment tasteless and insipid.—Nothing can cure the sickness of the heart, but the accomplishment of the *desire*: When that *cometh*, it is a *tree of life*,—to heal and revive the languishing mind. But if the object of *hope* be only some temporal good, the fruition is never adequate to the *desire*; consequently, can never be complete and satisfactory on this side the grave^z.—The *tree of life* is in Paradise only; to lay hold of that, “our affection must be set on the things that are above, and not on things on the earth.”—Where the affections are, there will the *desire* be. And when the object of such desire is eternal, and the fruition eternal too, this is *life* indeed; this is the ultimate and most consummate felicity of man; and therefore the only worthy, the only wise, object of our hopes and desires.

13. *Who so despiseth the word, shall be destroyed^h: but he that feareth the commandment, shall be rewarded.*

The only right way to true happiness is pointed out to us by the *word* of God. The *word* written, contains the precepts of it; the *word* incarnate came down from heaven to be our example, and our guide.—There is no other method but what the Scriptures shew; there is no other

^z See Annotation at the end.

^h See Annotation at the end.

496 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 13.

name under heaven but that of **JESUS**, to lead and conduct us to the realms of bliss. How inexcusable then must his guilt and folly be, who neglects so great salvation! how just his destruction, who not only rejects the means of grace, but affronts God by *despising his word!*—Whereas, he that trembleth at the *word* and *commands* of God, thro' fear to offend; he that followeth the Lamb of God, the living and eternal Word, in the spirit of love and obedience, shall have a sure *reward*,—of pardon and peace here; of glory and happiness everlasting hereafter.

14. *The law of the wise, is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.* By the *law of the wise* we may either understand the *word* written, or the *logos*, and co-essential word of God; or, we may take it

in both senses, as in the preceding verse; the one as the law, the other as the example, which every *wise* man chuses for the rule and pattern of his life and actions.—This Proverb occurs again in the next chapter, ver. 17. being there repeated as an observation of great importance. Only, what is here called the *law of the wise*, is there called the *fear of the LORD*: But this means the same thing, to wit, a life regulated by the fear of the Lord as by a law. This fear a wise man learns by the external word of God, but feels, and practically obeys, by the internal only; that is to say, by faith in Christ, and the power of his grace.—This last, and this only, is the *fountain* and *spring of life* here spoken of,—of life eternal (as some expound it), or more particularly, as our Lord explains it, the life of the spirit; for so, speaking of the person who should be endued with spiritual life, he saith, “Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” And this (as the evangelist remarks) spake he of the spirit, which they that believe on him should receive¹.—

¹ *John* vii. 38.

Or, as he elsewhere speaks, "The water that I" [the uncreated and co-essential word of God] "shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life^k."—And what are the *snare*s of death but sin? Death hath caught all men in that *snare*. And from this *snare* there is no escape, no way of *departing from*, but by this living water, this life of the Spirit through faith in the Son of God. They then that are *wise* will come to this *fountain*, and lay hold of this law of life, that they may *depart from the snare*s of death; yea, that they may for ever have cause to say, in the Psalmist's song of triumph, "Our soul is escaped, as a bird out of the hand of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped^l."

Another ingredient of
 15. *Good understanding* happiness, is *a good understanding*; that is, right reason, or good sense; when the understanding hath been improved, not only by natural helps and experience, but, above all, by the light of faith and Divine grace (that *law of the wise* abovementioned), without which no reason is right, nor understanding *good*.—This *giveth favour* both with God and man; it attracts the good-will of mankind, so as to pave the likeliest way to success in our temporal affairs; but it never fails to engage the *favour* and blessing of heaven, and to insure a future reward, whatever the event may prove in this world.—But all these schemes and projects of those, who *transgress* the laws of God and man, of reason and religion, and live by no rule but their own wild lusts and passions, they are, like rough ways, grievous and *hard*, both to themselves and others; and, in the end, terminate in a gulf of perdition;—often in this life; always, in the next.

^k John iv. 14.^l Ps. cxxiv. 7.

498 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 13.

16. *Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly.* Prudence and knowledge are two further ingredients in the composition of that

temporal happiness, which the Wise man is here speaking of.—Good understanding is indeed happy in speculation and contrivance, is therefore a good in itself, and also in the opinion and favour of others: But prudence is an active and practical good. It rests not in contemplation, but exerts in doing, as well as knowing, what is right. It *dealeth with knowledge*; trades and traffics with its talent of knowledge; is a common good, and promotes the benefit of others, as well as its own.—But he that is destitute of these divine gifts, which are essentially necessary to constitute both our temporal and eternal felicity, cannot but be a *fool*, and therefore unhappy.—A *fool*, for lack of knowledge; defeated in all his pursuits, for want of prudence.—Instead of gaining his ends, he *layeth open* and exposes *his folly*.

17. *A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health.* Another ingredient, or constituent part of human happiness, is fidelity, or a faithful discharge of every trust reposed in us, whether

it be in word or deed, in office or dealings; in a faithful administration of public or private justice. It relates, with punctuality and exactness, both facts and messages, more especially the embassies of peace and charity for healing or preventing any difference or breach. This amicable office, like *health* itself, restores and promotes that happiness, which the contrary practice of those who betray their trust, is utterly inconsistent with.—*A wicked messenger falleth into mischief*. Whatever harm he may do others, by a message that is false, or a mischievous message that is true, he is sure to hurt himself most.

Most

18. *Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof, shall be honoured.*

Most of the calamities of life which obstruct the present happiness of man, are owing to that pride of heart, wherewith those, who want instruction most, are apt to reject and refuse it. And what more just, according to the moral fitness of things, than that *poverty and shame* should be the effect and punishment of such a pride, as is less ashamed of being ignorant, than appearing to be so; and chuses rather to persist in its errors, than submit to a friendly reproof, or advice? Thus a false shame unavoidably betrays to that which is real: And the refusing *instruction*, is refusing happiness; because it rejects wisdom, which is the only means to obtain it. Such a one is justly despised, as the wilful author of his own misery, and unworthy of pity or relief. While he that *regardeth* a seasonable *reproof*, shall not only escape reproach or contempt, but be *honoured* and esteemed for his wisdom.

19. *The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul; but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.*

As all men naturally seek after happiness, so all place it in the accomplishment of their desires. But wicked men defeat their own desires, by seeking happiness where it cannot possibly be found. They not only seek the living among the dead, but good in the very reverse to it, evil. This they love, and will not *depart from*, though to eschew it, be the only condition of being happy:—They are therefore downright fools, and cannot but be miserable; because it is the necessary effect of their own choice.

20. *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

The company of bad men is infectious: Destruction and unhappiness is in their ways; all that *walk with them*, shall perish with them.

500 *The* Twenty-fourth SUNDAY Prov. 13.

—The first means therefore, as well as first step, towards happiness, is to avoid evil communication, and to chuse the company and conversation of those that are pious and *wise*.—Example is generally more prevalent than precept, and leads more strongly either to virtue or vice.

21. *Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repaid.*

Good and evil are the natural and necessary effects of good and evil actions. But it is very observable, what the Wise man here remarks, that the consequences of both the one and the other are rendered to their votaries in a double proportion. While the sinner pursues *evil*, evil pursues him: He follows the *evil* of sin as a false medium of happiness, and so necessarily falls into misery. In the mean time, the *evil* of punishment follows him at the heels, and, like an ambuscade, falls on his rear, and cuts him off.—In like manner, the righteous man both follows and is followed of God. The *good* he doth, shall be *repaid* with good. What he sows, he is sure to reap; often a double harvest,—of present happiness in this life, as well as that of glory in the next. Which is well expressed by the new version of our Psalms:

His hands, while they his alms bestowed,
His glory's future harvest sow'd;
Whence he shall reap wealth, fame, renown,
A temporal and eternal crown. *Pf. cxii.*

22. *A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.*

If we compare good and bad men, with respect to the goods of fortune, and the things of this life, common observation shews, that virtue and honesty is the surest way of acquiring and perpetuating an estate. The good man is no spendthrift; he improves by frugality

frugality what his industry hath gained; and hath ever somewhat to *leave* behind. Yea, he *leaveth an inheritance*, not only to an elder son, but to *his children's children*, even to every child, and their posterity; for he leaves the blessing of God to them all.— And this is an inheritance, which will descend to all, altho' he may have no worldly wealth to leave them. But the *wealth of the sinner* is generally attended with a secret curse. What he hath been laying up for his children, and to raise a family, proves often not to be laid up for them, but for others. Riches are no riches, except Providence entail a blessing therewith. Hence it comes to pass that the wealth of a covetous father is often squandered by an extravagant son.— This Proverb may also be taken in a more spiritual sense, That good men take care to transmit to their children and posterity, not only the blessings of heaven, but the great truths of religion, which they themselves have learned. Whereas, the wicked, at their death, shall forfeit and lose those graces and virtues which they seemed to have. “The talent, (as our Lord speaks), shall be taken from them, and given to others.”

23. *Much food is in the tillage of the poor : but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.*

Yea, altho' a good man be *poor*, and reduced to the necessity of earning his bread by the sweat of his brow, to the hard labour of digging or tilling the ground; his honest industry shall not only gain him a competent subsistence, but set him above those wants, which many a richer man brings on himself and family by vicious courses, and imprudent management. In a word, it is God only that maketh rich, and maketh poor : He that hath God, is rich, be he never so poor; he that hath not God, is poor, altho' he hath great riches.

▪ Matt. xxv. 28.

502 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 13.

24. *He that spareth his rod, hateth his son : but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.* All are not friends that carefs, nor enemies that smite. Love our children we ought, but with prudence and a wise moderation.—

And to correct them sharply, when necessity requires, is one part of paternal love. It is not tenderness, but cruelty, to a child, to indulge his vices, and bad habits, for fear of making him cry.—To *spare the rod*, and spoil the child, is an act of hatred rather than mercy, and more like an enemy than a parent; because nothing contributes more to ruin and undo our children, than such a foolish and fond indulgence. The only true love we can shew them, is to root out those evil inclinations, which they bring with them into the world, and which, if suffered to grow, will bring them to certain misery, and end in the destruction of body and soul. And the sooner this purgation of the mind is begun, the happier will it be for the child, and more for the ease and comfort of the parent. To *chasten* him therefore *betimes*, while he is tender and flexible, is the best proof of our wisdom and affection.

25. *The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul : but the belly of the wicked shall want.* The good man is satisfied with little, because his desires are moderate, and his rule temperance. But an ill man is in continual want, because he is satisfied

with nothing. The things of this world, in which he places his happiness, are, in their nature, unsatisfying: They may satiate and cloy, but cannot content, the soul of man. They rather inflame, than *satisfy*, the desire. Hence it comes to pass, that while some bring themselves to extreme poverty, by gratifying unsatiable appetites, there are others who remain indigent and poor in the midst of plenty, for fear of diminishing what they have. And as it is in evil, so is it also in the moral life. To a good man
one

one sentence of God's ho'y word is a feast: He feedeth on it to the *satisfying of his soul*. But the carnal man has no taste of any thing but what is for the *belly*. And whoso hungers after such sensual enjoyments, shall never find the happiness he aims at, and expects. — *The belly of the wicked shall want*: Whereas the truly virtuous man, in the very article of food, and the other ordinary actions of life, has always a regard to the improvement of his spiritual life, and the advantage of his soul. And in this he shall never fail of satisfaction. But the vicious person's concern is altogether for the animal life, and to fill his *belly* with good cheer. Yet in this also shall he often meet with disappointment; not only bring *want* upon himself, by his riotous living, but pining sickness, and an untimely end.

On ver. 12. *Fruition,—not complete on this side the grave.*] For the reason of this, see what Lord Verulam saith, in his 7th book of the advancement of learning, concerning the reception and fruition of things agreeable to our nature, which he calls [*bonum conservativum*] *good conservative*. He allows the opinion of Socrates to be partly true, That felicity is placed in a constant peace and tranquillity of mind; and the differing opinion of the Sophist, not to be wholly wrong, that it consisted in this; To desire much, and to enjoy much. But then he concludes, That the nature of man [in this life] is not capable of both at once.

Ver. 12. *Shall be destroyed.*] The Heb. *Jehabel Lo*, is by Buxtorf rendered *corrumpetur sibi*, i. e. *ipse*; by Pagnin, *propter contemptum ipsum*; by Castalio, *detrimentum capiet*: but the LXX have rendred it *καταφρονήσεται ἐν αὐτῷ*, *shall be despised of it*, i. e. of the Word: And seems to import the same with what our Lord saith, "Who-soever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny, &c." Matt. x. 33.; or with that saying in John xii. 43. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."



The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xiv.

P R E F A C E.

THIS chapter, in our Bible, is without any title of contents, being one of those, which, from the 10th to the 25th, are said, in the title to the tenth chapter, to contain sundry observations of moral virtues, and their contrary vices. Many of them we have had occasion, on the three foregoing Lessons, to comment upon, and to remark the vast and intrinsic difference that subsists between them; that so we may know to refuse the evil, and chuse the good.

In chapter the 11th hath been set before us, the excellence of virtue, and superior advantage, which the good man obtains over the wicked, not only in point of wisdom, but in true happiness.—In chapters 12th and 13th, is shewn wherein the true happiness of man, even in this life, doth consist. In our present Lesson, the Wise man proceeds to teach us, by various remarks on common life, the wide difference there is between religious and worldly wisdom; or wherein that wisdom lies, which alone can make us completely happy. That religious wisdom is the only prudence which can make us so; that the wisdom of
carnal

carnal and worldly persons, however crafty and cunning it may be, is mere folly and deceit; a deceiving others, but mostly ourselves.

Note, *Whereas in some years, there are but Twenty-four Sundays after TRINITY, it is to be observed, that the Proper Lessons for Sunday the Twenty-fourth are the 13th and 14th Prov. as set down in the table, and as they are here proposed; not the 15th and 16th chapters, as some readers have thought, and, by mistake, have read them, as the Proper Lessons for the day. The rubric indeed appoints the Collect with the Epistle and Gospel for the Twenty fifth Sunday to be read on this Twenty-fourth Sunday, whenever it happens to be the last before Advent; but there is no direction, nor any apparent reason, for changing the Proper Lessons, as hath been noted in the Introduction to these Essays.*

The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xiv.

1. *Very wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.*

*S*olomon, like a wise master-builder, beginneth his edifice of felicity with a sure and most durable foundation, namely, the care and wise management of families.—Here the first stone should be laid.—On private families are superstructed societies; on societies, kingdoms and commonwealths: And these, where-ever thus spread, do, by their wise, or evil, institution of youth, propagate the happiness or unhappiness of mankind.—The first care towards a national, as well as domestic, felicity, must therefore be a right education of children. Nay, we may add, the true wisdom hath, in this Proverb, an eye likewise to the procreation of them, as it plainly recommends

306 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 14.

commends a prudent choice in marriage. The only way to *build a house*, that is, to raise a family, is therefore the virtue and discretion of a *wise woman*. Such a one is the likeliest, not only to propagate a healthy offspring, but to train up her children in the ways of virtue, and early to instil into their minds those principles of religion and true piety, which most effectually lead to happiness, both temporal and eternal; framing them betimes to such habits of obedience, industry, and good order, as will render them useful members of society, faithful subjects, and good æconomists; pious towards God, and just to every relative duty in life.—We may further add, the management of domestic affairs, with regard to frugality, as well as peace and good order, depends so much on the conduct of the *woman*, that the prosperity or ruin of a family is chiefly owing to her.—*A wise woman buildeth her house: the foolish plucketh that down*, which had been built.

Religious wisdom chuses

2. *He that walketh in his uprightness, feareth the LORD: but he that is perverse in his ways, despiseth him.*

ever the paths of honesty and *uprightness*. In these the good man *walks*, even because he *feareth the Lord*. And this fear, as it keepeth him steady in his way, so it

conducts him safe to an happy end. Whereas the profane worldling despises such plain dealing, because he *despises God*. But his own crooked and *perverse* ways, if continued in, will end in misery; it being the broad way that leadeth to destruction.

3. *In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.*

As good and bad men differ in the tenour of their actions and schemes of life, so the means they make use of to gain their respective ends, do as widely disagree.

The carnally wise think to carry their point by a notable tongue, proud boastings, bitter revilings,

sharp

sharp inveſtive, wit and clamour. But this, in the iſſue, proves only a *rod of pride*; a rod that ſhall chaſtiſe their own pride, rather than hurt others; and therefore will appear, in the end, to be a *fooliſh* courſe. Whereas the good man employs his tongue to a wiſe uſe; not to annoy, but to benefit, others; not to hurt, but to ſerve and defend, himſelf.—*The lips of the wiſe ſhall preſerve them.*

4. *Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increaſe is by the ſtrength of the ox.*

Secondly, Religious wiſdom is no enemy to labour and induſtry, even the hardeſt of labour, the buſineſs and toil of agriculture. If that be the good man's occupation, he attends it with diligence, and a chearful contentedneſs with his condition. And withal, takes a due care of his cattle, and the implements of his huſbandry. But the ſinner, who places his happineſs in pleaſure, ſhuns the laborious employments of life; affects to live by his wits, more than by induſtry, and honeſt labour.—Such a man may well have a *clean crib*, and be at ſmall labour to keep it ſo. But when the time of harveſt comes, then will appear which of the two is the wiſe man. He that provided no *oxen* to plow, has no corn to reap: He that took care of his beaſt and his tillage, receives, for his pains, a plentiful crop.—*Much increaſe is by the ſtrength of the ox.* By all which we are to learn this general Leſſon, That true wiſdom, as it purſues a right end, ſo it ever makes choice of the beſt means for attaining it; but ill men neglect both, and therefore are unwiſe.

5. *A faithful witneſs will not lie: but a falſe witneſs will utter lies* ^a.

Thirdly, Another principle, which religious wiſdom purſues, and adheres to, with great conſtancy, is to ſpeak truth

^a *Utter lies.*] The Hebrew has an elegance which our *Engliſh* tranſlation has not attained:—*Eſſabit mendacia*, will breathe out lies.

truth on all occasions; especially if called to give testimony to any matter. Neither fear nor favour shall bias a good man to deny or disguise the truth. But he that wants that principle in his heart, hath nothing to restrain his tongue from lying or prevarication, where his interest, or his passion, may tempt him to be false.—This sense is indeed so very obvious and plain, that it seems to call for another, which may be more instructive.—Jesus Christ is the *faithful witness* (and so called, Rev. i. 5.). All Christians ought to be *faithful* witnesses to him: But such only are so, who practise the religion he taught; who believe the truths he revealed, and shew their faith by their works. But he is a *false witness*, who pretends to believe in Christ, yet doth not obey him; who hath taken the triple vow in baptism, yet doth not perform it; who confesses his Saviour in words, but denies him in his evil deeds. Such a one's heart gives the lie to his lips, and his whole life is a contradiction to his profession.

6. *A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.*

Some of the truths of religion are so simple and plain, that pride despises, or overlooks them; others so sublime, that they are above the apprehension of worldly

minds. The natural man discerns them not, neither can he know them^b. Hence proceeds that scorn and contempt, which the true wisdom meets with in the world; and hence it comes to pass, that such proud and haughty *scorners* set themselves to seek for wisdom in their own vain speculations; but, “The Gospel is hid to such men^c.” The god of this world hath so blinded their eyes, that they cannot see the kingdom of God, much less enter into it. Whatever their pre-

lies. As if every breath were fraught with lies: So accustomed to lying, that he cannot speak a word of truth.

^b 1 Cor. ii. 14.

^c 2 Cor. iv. 3.

tences may be to new discoveries, new lights, and deeper researches into truth; how great abilities forever they may have in other matters; they always do, and ever must, fail of the end they propose to themselves; because they *seek wisdom*, where it is impossible to find it.—Their very search, while it carries them from the author and fountain of it, serves only to set them at the greater distance, and to render their labour as fruitless and vain, as their attempt is impious and profane. The further they fly from religion, the further they depart from the truth, taking a great deal of pains only to be out of the way, and to miss the mark they aim at. But the *knowledge of wisdom* is *easy to him that understandeth* what it is, and wherein it consists. Christ is the way and the truth; and his Spirit the only guide to lead us into all truth^d. They that have Christ, have wisdom, and right reason; for he is wisdom and reason itself. He giveth both light and sight to the blind. In his light we see light. Reason and faith are the two eyes of the soul, and he giveth them both. And where both these eyes are open, and the defect of natural light hath been rectified and improved by the rays of Divine grace, there all necessary *knowledge* cannot but be *easy* and plain. By this light the things of the world will appear in their proper colours and size; not only little, but delusive and vain; and spiritual truths appear as they are, great, heavenly, and divine; and therefore highly worthy to be embraced and believed; the conscience submitting to their authority, as truths revealed of God; and reason clearly discerning the equity, as well as duty, of conforming to the dictates of Infinite wisdom.

These three verses seem to
 7. *Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou* have a coherence with the Apophthegm contained in

^d John xvi. 13.

510 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 14.

perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

8. *The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.*

9. *Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favour.*

the preceding verse, and may teach us, that nothing is more dangerous than the company and conversation of scoffers, and profane deriders of religion. Their breath is pestilential, their very presence is infectious.

—Fly therefore from the society of such impious

wretches, as you would from a plague. —The best security of good principles, as well as good morals, is to avoid conversing with such as are noted for bad ones; who *make a mock at sin*, even because they have no faith. They first renounce their Creed, and then throw off the Commandments. To attempt the conversion of such is as dangerous as it is vain. —Cast not therefore your pearls before such swine; for they will not turn, except it be to rend you. Their obstinate aversion to the knowledge of heavenly truths, is proof against the strongest arguments you can bring. To reason with them therefore, is but to stir up their gall to greater profaneness. And the very hearing of blasphemous and atheistical discourse, not only wounds the ear, but often defiles the conscience, of the hearer. He cannot well be innocent who has patience to listen to their wicked talk, or to read their books.

10. *The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.*

As the *heart* is the seat of the affections, so is it likewise the court of conscience; and no one knows what passes there, but God and ourselves. —Here the pas-

sions of hope and fear, love and hatred, grief and joy, keep their residence; but in so recluse and secret a manner, that the rest of the world are perfect *strangers* to them; they *intermeddle* not with the motions of the heart; they can neither place them there,

nor

nor drive them hence. He only, who alone knows what is in man, sees and controuls the hidden man of the heart.—Now the affections of the heart constantly operate as they are acted by wisdom or folly; and the fruits, or effects, which these two contrary principles produce, are ever correspondent thereto. Folly turns the greatest joy into bitterness: Wisdom changes the greatest bitterness into joy. But, alas! man is too often a *stranger* to himself; he mistakes these secret springs of his happiness or misery. He shuns *bitterness* indeed, as the greatest evil; but shuns not folly, which is the cause of it. He seeks *joy*, as his greatest good; but seeks it not of wisdom, which alone can bestow it. 'Tis Divine wisdom only that rectifies this wrong propension of the heart, and sets its bias right. We then see, that *bitterness* (if it proceed from the hatred, not the love, of sin) is the first and surest step to *joy*; that the very tears of repentance have more sweetness than all the pleasures of sin; and that no peace or comforts can be lasting and sincere, but what flow from thence. Then, and not 'till then, we find our Lord's saying verified, That "they who "mourn, are truly blessed."

Another difference between the good and bad man, is with regard to their place of abode. The wicked looks on this world as his home; here he sets up his rest, and builds his *house*. But, as he builds on the sand, it cannot stand long. Yea, the stronger it is built, and the higher it is raised on so weak a foundation, so much the sooner will it be *overthrown*, and so much the greater will be the fall thereof. But the good man considers himself as a pilgrim, and sojourner in this world: He pitches only a *taber-*

nacle,
but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

512 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 14.

nacle, or tent, here: His mansion is above; his house fixed on a rock, which can never fail.

12. *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

Another distinguishing character of religious wisdom and folly, is the judgment we make of the ends and consequences of our actions and pursuits. A due care of this, which is also a sign, as well as effect, of wisdom, will conduct us safe to peace and happiness. But he that slights her directions, may fancy himself in a way that is *right*, and go on, for a time, with complacency and delight, but he will find the *end thereof* to be the *ways of death*. He is going as an ox to the slaughter, or a bird to the snare; and the more haste he makes, the sooner will he fall therein; then curse his folly, when too late to repent.—But, oh! is there not a danger, which the very professors of religion too often fall into? Do not even these sometimes mistake their guide, and run into the ways of folly, while they think themselves in the paths of wisdom? A blind zeal is the cause of this unhappy error. This confounds the judgment, by inflaming the passions; hurries the mind into unwarrantable extremes; gives a wrong turn to our thoughts and actions; and, by false gloss, turns our very sins into virtues, and our virtues into sins. So that, if once we let go prudence and humility, how *right* soever our way may *seem*, the *end thereof* will prove the *ways of death*.

13. *Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.*

The very mirth, and loudest laughter, of the wicked man, is ever mingled with bitterness and sorrow.—In this world his greatest enjoyments are never sincere; and weeping and gnashing of teeth are the heavy conclusion of all his short-lived pleasures, in the next, except it be prevented by a timely repentance.

The

14. *The backslider in heart*

shall be filled with his own ways : and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.

The first part of the verse contains a caution against relapsing into sin.—A man's *ways* are his customs and habits ; and if these ways be his *own*, they cannot but be wrong ; none being right, and leading to true happiness, but the ways of God. If, for some time, a man hath walked in God's ways, and then slides back again into his *own*, it is said, he shall be *filled with them* ; that is to say, shall be cloyed therewith. The gratifications of sin are like those of the appetite, the sweeter and more delicious they are, and the more they are indulged, the sooner they cause a loathing, and end in a surfeit. God is happiness itself ; and whoso forsakes him, of course forsakes his own mercy. The very appetites and passions he gratifies, shall breed his unhappiness, and prove his tormentors,—often in this world, but always in the next ; where the measure of his punishment shall for ever bear proportion to his folly, and *fill* him with misery. The pleasures of sin are like vipers in the womb of their dam, first fill, and then burst, the heart that breeds them.—But the *good man*, who seeks not happiness from outward enjoyment and the gratifications of sense, but the testimony of a good conscience, and the Spirit of God, bearing witness with his Spirit, that he is the child of God, finds a constant fund of comfort and satisfaction in his own breast beyond all the pleasures of the world. He hath his happiness and his heaven within him, because his God is there ; God is in his heart, and in all his thoughts. He need not go out to the world, nor to others to seek felicity, who has it with him, and at home.—He is *satisfied from himself*, i. e. from that principle of comfort, even the Holy Ghost, who not only dwelleth *with* him, but is *in* him, according to our Lord's true promise, *John* xiv. 17. and ch. xvi. 20.

514 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 14.

15. *The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.*

In the Scriptures we meet with two kinds of simplicity, one condemned as a vice, the other recommended as a virtue. From whence we gather, that simplicity, in itself, is indifferent, and either good or bad, according to the temper and disposition, or the principles, customs, or example, which influence the mind. Our Wise man, for the most part, uses simplicity in the vicious sense, at least as a weakness and imperfection. So in the 18th ver. "the simple inherit folly;" and, chap. i. 31. "The turning away of the simple shall slay them." But in the New Testament, it bears a better character; is, by St. Paul, joined with godly sincerity^f; and, by our Lord, is called a singleness of heart, and compared to the innocence of the dove.—To reconcile this seeming difference, we must consider, that *Solomon*, in this treatise of moral instructions, is representing to us the general character of man, as it now stands, with respect to his present fallen state, and according to the duties to which he stands bound in the several capacities of natural, civil, moral, or religious, life. In any of these respects, simplicity is a quality he thinks necessary to caution us against, as an impediment, at least, to that true happiness which he particularly treats of in our present Lesson; because, by its credulity, and forwardness to *believe every word*, without due consideration, it is liable to be imposed upon, and lays us open to many dangerous errors and delusions. This, in natural life, argues a want of common sense, and makes us contemptible: In civil life, it betrays a weakness unfit to be trusted, and so makes us less useful members of society. In the moral life, a simple credulity is inconsistent with prudence (as the Wise man here observes), and so endangers our virtue. In religion indeed, especially the Christian, it bears a

^f 2 Cor. i. 14.

fairer name, and more honourable character. Christianity supposes it corrected, and set free from the above-mentioned defects of natural or acquired ignorance; and, in that case, it is the best soil to receive the good seed of the Gospel, and has ever the readiest ear to hearken to the dictates of faith. To *believe every word* of GOD, is a laudable virtue in a disciple of Christ; but it pre-supposes a right knowledge of God, and his Word. It was this holy simplicity which so much recommended the faith of *Nathaniel*, *John i. 51.*; the faith of the beggar restored to sight, *John ix. 30, &c.*; and of those whom our blessed Lord (*ch. xx. 19.*) pronounces blessed, “who had not seen, and yet should believe.”—Simplicity in religion, although it may sometimes err, is nevertheless an excuse, and some extenuation of the fault.—But we may observe, that the Wise man, in our Lesson, points out the best way to avoid all dangerous credulity, even by placing our simpleness under the conduct of prudence. And this a Christian cannot want, seeing he may have it for asking; for so we are assured, “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him².” Simplicity and prudence should constantly be joined together, and never put asunder: For as prudence, without simplicity, degenerates into craft, so simplicity without prudence, is no better than mere fatuity. But where the innocence of the dove, and the cunning of the serpent, are united, they never fail to promote the happiness of man.

16. *A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rages, and is confident.*

Another wide and important distinction between religious and worldly wisdom, is this; the good man not only governs his passions by a prudent restraint, and the dictates of reason,

² *James i. 5.*

but directs them aright, and to their proper objects: Sin he *fears*, as the only *evil*; and therefore *departs from* it, as from a serpent that lies in his way; or he hastens to forsake it, when overtaken by frailty or surprize. He considers the ways of human life as spread with snares of sin and death, and his spiritual enemies as incessantly on the watch to intrap him therein; therefore he is constantly on his guard to shun, or extricate himself from, the danger. In a word, he avoids all carnal security: He *fears* to offend God, because he loves him; he *fears evil*, because he abhors it; he *fears* even little sins, because they are the trains which lead to greater; he *fears* great and presumptuous sins, because they separate from God, and are mortal to the soul.—But the man who has only carnal wisdom to guide him, acts like a fool or a madman; he sees not his danger, because he sees not his sins. Or if any friend be so kind to forewarn or advise him, he is so far from taking it in good part, that he *rages*, and is *confident*: He resents the admonition, as an affront to his understanding; he is the more bent to proceed, as counting it a weakness to desist, and a cowardice to *fear*. But such security and confidence is neither wisdom nor true courage. To run boldly into danger, where the soul is at stake, is a desperate madness; to despise it, is the height of folly. So that this proverb coincides with that saying, ch. xxii. 3. “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.”

17. He that is *soon angry*,
dealeth foolishly: and a man
of *wicked devices* is *hated*.

This seems to have some connection with the foregoing. It begins with a general observation, that sudden anger, especially when provoked by advice, or reproof, as in our preceding remark, is not only a sign of folly, but it *dealeth foolishly*, or, *maketh folly*, as the original signifies^h;

^h *Facit stultitiam.*

it multiplies, and makes it increase, by adding folly to folly, foolish actions to foolish thoughts; and so the man that is *soon angry*, is not only unwise, but wicked.—What follows, that *a man of wicked devices is bated*, is to insinuate to us another kind of folly; which, though seemingly more prudent and wise, is yet more odious than the former. Hasty wrath makes a man contemptible, because it exposes his weakness; but he that bridles his passion, and suppresses the first sallies of anger, till he find opportunity for a cruel revenge, shews indeed more cunning by so *wicked a device*, but it is the craft of a serpent, and the malice of a devil; and therefore more hateful than the other, both to God and man. To be wise to do evil, is as contrary to wisdom, as it is to goodness.

We have already remark-

18. *The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.* ed (on ver. 15.), that simplicity, by our divine philosopher, is usually ranked among the follies, or, at

least, the foibles and failings, if not vices, of mankind; being contrary to that prudence and discretion which he every where recommends.—The *simple* are here said to *inherit folly*; which seems to intimate, that vice and folly are generally hereditary; that it too often descends, like an inheritance, from parents to their children; and so this saying contains in it a severe reproof of that unhappy neglect of a wise and religious education, which propagates the ignorance and bad example of parents to their posterity. A case too obvious to common observation. Men are simple and ignorant, because they were bred so. Few there be that *inherit* the virtues, but most men do the vices, of their fathers. Virtue indeed cannot be entailed, because it is the gift of God; but sin and folly may, and is, because it is the universal corruption of nature; for what else is the taint of original sin, but the sad entail of our first parents transgres-

518 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 14.

sion?—But *the prudent* (who stand here opposed to the *simple* just before mentioned) *are crowned with knowledge*.—A crown, we know, is one of the most illustrious ensigns of honour and power in this world, and therefore usually framed of the brightest and most costly materials that art and nature can supply. But religious wisdom bestows a crown more glorious, more inestimably rich, than gold and precious stones; for the crown she gives is *knowledge*. And this she bestows on men, not as great and mighty princes, not as men of learning, or profound masters of sciences and arts, but as *prudent*; such as, with *Mary*, have wisely chosen the better part, the one thing needful. These she *crowns with knowledge*;—with the *knowledge* of God and of themselves, in which true wisdom consists; with the *knowledge* of Christ, who is the way and the truth, which leads to eternal life: She crowns them with the crown of righteousness here, and will hereafter crown them with glory. Then shall true piety be *crowned* with the most consummate *knowledge*, as its ultimate reward, and most glorious diadem of all, even to know as we are known; to know God as he is in himself, and in him to know all things.—*O præclaram vitæ ducem philosophiam!* Cic.—*O glorious knowledge*, worthy, alone worthy, of the name of philosophy! worthy of all our most ardent pains and study to acquire!—How *simple* then must he be, who sits down contented with his patrimony of *folly*, and feels no ambition in his soul to strive for that crown, that triple crown, of *divine knowledge*!

19. *The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.* There is something so amiable as well as awful, in goodness, and true piety, that the worst of men cannot forbear entertaining a secret respect and veneration for those who are eminently good. And we often see the *wicked*, through the

the effects of their impiety, or folly, reduced to the necessity of suing for advice, and often for relief, *at the gates of the righteous*. The justice of Divine Providence constraining them not only to do honour to those they had despised, but to seek favour and protection from them, whom they had injured in their fortune, or good name. And when this happens, it is a tacit, but plain, confession, even from the enemies of religion, That piety is the best and truest wisdom.

20. *The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.* Again, if we compare the *rich* and the *poor*; it is true, the common lot of the poor man is not only to be *despised*, but to be *hated*, even

21. *He that despiseth his neighbour, sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.* *by his own neighbour* and acquaintance; and the *rich*, seemingly at least, to have many friends. But such contempt of poverty is no wisdom, such friendships are no happiness; because he that *despiseth his neighbour* for being poor, is guilty of a great sin; and he is the only wise and *happy* rich man, who *hath mercy on the poor*, and employs his wealth in relieving their distress, and doing good; who maketh such men his friends by the mammon of unrighteousness, that when he fails, they may receive him into everlasting habitations¹.

22. *Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.* None make greater pretences to wisdom than your men of parts, deep penetration, and subtilty. But if they employ their ingenuity and cunning in *devising evil*, and contriving mischief, they deviate as far from true wisdom, as they do from grace. But if they use their talent in *devising good*, they are wise indeed; for

¹ Luke xvi.

520 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 14.

they fulfil the whole law, even both the tables ; Love to their neighbour, in shewing *mercy* ; Love to God, in obeying the *truth*. And what greater wisdom than this ; to be wise for themselves, wise for their neighbour, and wise unto salvation !

23. *In all labour there is profit : but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.* Some place wisdom in the gift of the tongue, in talking eloquently and well ; yea, in the knack and habit of talking much ; but, alas !

the consequence of this prating humour will soon convict them of folly ; and that it will then appear, the hardest *labour* with the hand is a wiser and more innocent employment than the wittiest harangues of the tongue. For *in all such labour there is profit*, profit both of time and wealth ; *but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury*. This effect of garrulity and talkativeness is an observation, which daily experience confirms. It often defrauds us of our substance, but always of our time ; it is therefore a manifest folly ; it may be wit, but it is not wisdom.

24. *The crown of the wise is their riches : but the foolishness of fools is folly.* Riches in the hands of a wise man are a real blessing ; not only an advantage, but an ornament. He acquires them honestly, uses them

prudently, dispenses them liberally : He hides them not in a napkin, or lets them rust in his chest.—

Whatever other virtues even a religious man may have, they will appear to no advantage, except he be liberal, as well as pious ;—unless he be bountiful, as well as just.—Riches enable him to do good, and to communicate ; and if he do so, they not only set him, but his virtues also, above contempt ; they do honour both to him, and to religion too ; they are a *crown* to his head, and an ornament of grace to his whole character.—But where virtue and religious prudence are wanting, whether the man be poor or rich, simple or cunning, high or low, his maxims, thoughts,

thoughts, words, and actions, are but so many ways of displaying his *folly*.

25. *A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies.*

But there is one other very trying occasion, wherein the excellence of heavenly wisdom appears greatly superior to that of the world.—A

good man is not afraid to speak the boldest truths, when it concerns his own soul, or the soul of others. He is not daunted at the frown of the great, the contempt of the proud, nor the anger of a friend, when it becomes his duty to rebuke vice, and recommend virtue and piety; especially as a faithful pastor, and charged with the cure of souls, he shuns not to declare the whole counsel of God; is not moved with any danger, nor counts his life dear to himself, so that he may bear witness to the truth, and testify the Gospel of the grace of God, knowing that this is the only way to *deliver souls* out of the snares of the devil,—the souls of all that hear him, if they obey the truth; but, in all events, he is sure to *deliver* his own. Whereas, he that is afraid to speak wholesome, but disagreeable, truths; or hopes, by a criminal silence, to secure his temporal interest, or even life itself; may think it a piece of wisdom, or good policy; but it is no better than folly and *deceit*:—He deceives others, but himself most.—“Ye are my “witnesses,” said Christ to his apostles; and so are all Christians one to another.—“Thou shalt, in any “wise, rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon “him¹.”—But whensoever truth itself calls upon us to give our testimony thereto (for truth meets often with contradiction and persecution in this wicked world), to refuse or decline our evidence, is to betray it, as *Judas*; or to deny it, as *Peter* did. Yea, to be silent on such occasions, is to *speak lies*.

¹ Lev. xix. 17.

522 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 14.

26. *In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.*

27. *The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.*

Taking the foregoing verse in the sense we have given it, these two, that immediately follow, seem to contain the reason of that holy confidence, which good men shew, in asserting, or maintaining the truth upon all occasions; even because they

know they are always safe in so doing: They fear the LORD, and therefore fear nothing else: They fear Him, and therefore fear not the faces of men.— This is the *fear*, in which alone is *strong confidence*.— And what follows [*his children shall have a place of refuge*] is not meant so properly of such a person's children, as some interpreters expound it, but of the *children of GOD*; they that are so, first, by adoption, in the laver of regeneration, and ever after continue so, in duty and affection, these *shall*, in their dangers and difficulties from a proud ill-natured and troublesome world, which hateth the truth, *have a constant place of refuge* to retire to, when persecution arises for the truths they profess, and the opposition grows too mighty to withstand. Hence we may conclude, that this *fear of the LORD*, which yieldeth this *strong confidence* in boldly speaking the truth, or defending it, is not a servile, but a filial, *fear of God*; not only as he is our liege Lord and Master, and we his professed servants; but as he is a Father, and we his children; a Father that loves us, and whom we love and honour.

On ver. 27. a pious and able commentator^m makes a just remark on Christian fortitude: That it is grounded on that humility which flows from the knowledge of God and ourselves. But as we have more than once taken occasion to make the same observation upon other Lessons, and are now led by

our design, rather to consider the various instances of religious, and worldly wisdom, we must not omit one remark he makes, which comes home to our purpose, and never was more seasonable than at this time: And it is this; that even among religious persons, there is a false wisdom, as well as a true, a distinction of the greatest consequence to be apprized of. Certain men are risen up of late amongst us, who teach, or rather have revived, a very false and pernicious notion, concerning the religious *confidence* here spoken of in our Lesson. They call it assurance, yet place it not, as our Wise man doth, in the *fear of the Lord*, and an awful respect unto all his commandments; that is, in an humble obedience and trembling at his word, but in a strong and confident belief that they are perfect, and without sin. This they awkwardly call new-birth, regeneration, election, &c. But the assurance they build, on the mistaken sense of these terms, quite evacuates repentance, which is that *fear of the Lord* here spoken of, and the only sure ground of our *confidence* towards him. For, not he that denies, but he that confesses, and repents of, his sin, has any claim to the assurance of mercy and forgiveness. It likewise sets aside that filial and more generous *fear of the Lord*, which worketh by love, in all the instances of practical duties, and an uniform obedience. And this they do, by exploding the necessity of good works; nay, some of them are not afraid nor ashamed to reject the whole moral law, even the Ten Commandments, as not made for them, but for *Jews* only. By this means they cease to *fear the Lord* as a judge and avenger, because they cease to fear the guilt and danger of sin; they cease to serve him as a master, or to love him as a father, by ceasing to obey him in all those works which he has prepared for us to walk in. Such a false assurance cannot but render men indifferent to all the duties of the cross, all self-denying exercises
of

524 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 14.

of mortification, humility, and every act of penitential discipline; yea, to all confession of sin: This must insensibly betray them to pride and presumption, to exalt themselves, and to despise others. Thus, by misplacing their confidence on themselves, and their own purity, rather than on that of God, which reveres his justice, and humbly relies on his mercy, which loves his service, and keeps his commandments, they depart from the *fountain of life*, which that fear leads to, and fall into the *snarcs of death*, which that fear would prevent.

As to political wisdom, 29. *In the multitude of people is the king's honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.* if we consider which is the best art of government, and the wisest scheme for advancing a *king's honour*, and the happiness of a nation, we shall find it consists more in the *multitude* of his *people* at home, than in extending his dominions by conquests abroad. And the surest means of promoting this increase of his *people*, is the encouragement of industry and virtue: These have a natural tendency to make a country both populous and rich: What augments their numbers, will increase their strength: what adds to their strength, will increase their love and affection to their prince. Their very interest will make them loyal; their loyalty will incline, and their numbers enable, them to defend him against every enemy, as the father of his people, and the author of every public blessing they enjoy. But he that impoverishes his subjects to gratify his avarice, or whose ambition wastes them by unnecessary wars, what does he, but pursue his own *destruction*? He betrays his lack of wisdom, in that he neither consults his people's good nor his own.—The like reflection may be applied to those pastors who have the care of souls: To be diligent, in increasing the number of the faithful, is their greatest *honour*; but to be remiss in enlarging

enlarging their master's fold, and winning of souls to Christ, will severely be required at the last day, and terminate in their own *destruction*. O that this were more seriously considered by masters of families, by parents, and especially by our own clergy and ministers!

29. He that is *slow to wrath* is of *great understanding*: but he that is *hasty of spirit* exalteth *folly*.

In common life there is one instance of superior wisdom; rarely indeed to be met with, and therefore deserves the oftener to be mentioned. And that is, a just and perfect command of the

passion of anger.—Many are the provocations to anger in this troublesome and vexatious world; but there is only one cause, that can justify our being angry; and he that has attained the art of regulating his passion by this, gives evident proof of a *great understanding*: This cause is sin, and the offences committed against God. In this case, and for this cause only, anger is lawful. The christian philosopher is no stoic; he places his wisdom, not in totally eradicating the passion of anger, but in determining the object, directing the use, and limiting the degree. Our Wise man therefore defines him not, by an absolute privation of *wrath*, but by his *slowness* thereto. God himself is angry at sin, and at nothing else; and yet he is *slow* to punish, or to shew his *wrath*. He then that acts in the same manner, and imitates God, cannot but be of *great understanding*. Whereas he that is *hasty of spirit*, and takes fire at every provocation, yea, often without any cause at all, may well be said to *exalt folly*.—Of all the natural passions, anger is not only the blindest, but the fiercest, and the most adverse to reason. Nature therefore has placed the irascible faculty in the inferior part of our composition. He that keeps it down, and within its proper bounds, as subservient to the great ends of reason and religion, approves himself a man of
great

526 *The Twenty-third SUNDAY* Prov. 14.

great and true wisdom; but he that *exalts* it into the seat of reason, becomes a slave to his own passion; and, being governed by folly, how can he be wise?

30. *A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.*

A *sound heart* is a good conscience; not only whole, and undivided between God and the world; not only free from the stings of guilt, and any flagrant sin; but grounded on faith, and rooted in love: For this is the true soundness of the heart: And this sound constitution, and health of conscience, communicates health and soundness even to the flesh. This made the Psalmist say, "My flesh and my bones rejoice in the living God." It gives vivacity and joy to the spirits, a free and vigorous flow to the blood, constant serenity and calm to the passions, cheerfulness to the countenance, delight to every sense, and spreads health and strength through the whole frame. So that long life, even in this world, is the natural effect, as well as religious reward, of a *sound* and good heart. But where the heart is infected with a spirit of *envy*, it soon corrupts the whole mass of nature, not only destroys every comfort of life, but *life* itself; penetrates, like a subtil poison, to the very marrow, and gives *rottenness to the bones*. Our Wise man often lashes this vice, and the passion of anger; yet with this remarkable distinction; anger he reproves as unruly and mischievous, if unrestrained; but not as evil in itself, because it is the work of God; but *envy* he every-where condemns, not only as mischievous, but as absolutely evil, because it is the work, and very character of *Satan*: On this reflection seems founded that other proverb, "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before *envy*?" Ch. xxvii. 4.

31. *He that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth his*

To *oppress the poor* and needy, is not only injurious to the sufferer, but to Providence

makerⁿ: but he that honoureth him, hath mercy on the poor.

vidence also that made him so. This, in common life, is both cruel towards him, and impious towards God;

but, in the case of religion, he that persecutes one of the members of Christ, for being meek and poor in spirit, may truly be said to hate and reproach him that made and loves him for being so. And this kind of oppression is such an indignity to Christ, as will inevitably incur that sentence at the last day, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me^o." But whoso loves the *poor*, especially the saints and servants of God, and shews them mercy in the time of their necessity and distress, not only relieves the most worthy objects of benevolence and charity, but performs an action, which Christ will accept as an honour, and reward as a service done to himself.

32. *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.*

The very wickedest of men, when distress and anguish cometh upon them, will fly to God for mercy. But God, who sees it is not any sense of repentance, or

remorse for sin, but the mere dread of punishment, that compels them to this involuntary submission, will reject their prayers, and, as it were, *drive* them away from his presence, with this fearful sentence: "Go ye cursed, &c."—"Ye have long enjoyed the pleasures of sin; now reap the bitter fruits:" See chap. i. 26. But a good man is not dismayed in the greatest dangers; even in *death* his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord; yea, then more especially, as *death* puts an end to all his troubles.

33. *Wisdom reſteth in the heart of him that hath un-* But although wisdom be an amiable thing, and generally procures great ho-

ⁿ Heb. The maker of him, i. e. him that made him poor.

^o Matt. xxv.

528 *The Twenty-fourth SUNDAY* Prov. 14.

derstanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.

nour and applause; a prudent man makes no ostentatious shew of it; but conducts himself with a discreet gravity and reserve, till a fitting opportunity presents for doing good therewith. Whereas, the vain and conceited person cannot contain himself, but is forward to vent his learning, or knowledge, in every company, and without regard to time or place. The Wise man intimates likewise, that the proper seat of divine wisdom is the *heart*.—A good head may indeed have understanding; but a good *heart* only can have wisdom; because true wisdom chooses that, rather than the head, to *rest* and abide in.

34. *Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.*

The worldly-wise, who live by sight and not by faith, look only on second causes, as the spring of all public events. They exclude the hand of Divine Providence, as the first-mover, and sovereign director, of the great machine of government. They regard only the policy or conduct, the wealth or power, of the prince; the courage or numbers of the people; the fortune of war; yea, mere chance itself; as the causes of a nation's prosperity and success. But our divine philosopher, who was likewise both King and Prophet, and therefore best understood the art of government, teaches us a truer Lesson; that the happiness and glory of all states and kingdoms depend solely on the favour of God. If justice and piety prevail, and the maxims of state be founded on the maxims of religion and virtue, that people and government shall assuredly flourish, and be *exalted* to great prosperity and honour. But where vice and immorality, profaneness and irreligion, are suffered to reign, and wickedness, by example, or impunity, be permitted to grow epidemical, these we may look upon as the surest pre-
sages of impending judgments and public calamities.

Comets,

Comets, and fearful sights, do often indeed usher in the remarkable mutations in church and state; but a general depravity of manners is the most certain prognostic of any, because it is the prime source from whence such dreadful warnings flow.—All histories, both sacred and profane, confirm this observation, as a fundamental maxim in politics, That *righteousness* (that is, the practice of virtue) *exalteth a nation, but that sin* (i. e. vice and immorality) *is a reproach to any people.*

35. *The king's favour is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causeth shame.*

If this be true, and a common observation in the political world, and in all civil trusts; it is much more so in spirituals. It may serve therefore as a proper conclusion to our Lesson, that the Divine Wisdom, which

it has been recommending to us, is that which alone qualifies us for the service, and intitles us to the favour, of the Great King of heaven and earth. But he that brings reproach on religion, by a life unsuitable to his high calling, or deserts the service of his heavenly master, shall meet with infamy and *wrath*, tribulation and anguish, when called to give account of his stewardship, at the great day of retribution.





The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xv.

P R E F A C E.

IN this Lesson we are taught;

First, The government, and right use, of the tongue; which ought to be the instrument,

1st, Of peace, in pacifying wrath, by soft words, ver. 1, 18.

2dly, Of wisdom; in dispensing and communicating knowledge, by instruction, ver. 2, 4, 7. and by reproof, ver. 10, 31.

3dly, Of counsel; in keeping secrets, by silence, ver. 22.

4thly, Of truth; in speaking the truth from the heart, ver. 28.

5thly, Of prayer; in offering it up to God, ver. 8, 26, 29.

Secondly, The regulation of our thoughts and affections, and the right use of the passions, viz.

1st, Of love and esteem; towards them who instruct us in virtue, or reprove us for vice, ver. 5.

2dly, Of anger; that it should be restrained, and not easily provoked, ver. 18.

3dly,

3dly, Of joy; the best foundation of which is a good conscience, ver. 13, 15.—The best expression and indication of it, are words of sincerity and truth, flowing from, and corresponding with, an honest heart, ver. 23, 28.—The effects of such well-grounded joy, is a cheerful countenance; yea, that it is the best cosmetic, and a very beautifier of the face, ver. 13.—A fatterer of the bones, ver. 30.—A continual feast, ver. 15.—A light to the eyes, ver. 30. Securing a good report without, and a solid and lasting satisfaction within.

4thly, Of fear; grounded on a sense of God's universal presence, ver. 3, 11.—Of his justice, in abhorring the wicked and their ways, ver. 9.—Abominating their very prayers, ver. 8, 19.—And their thoughts, ver. 26.—In punishing the proud, ver. 25.—Such a pious fear is the faithfulest monitor, and surest preservative, against sin, as well as encourager to good, ver. 3, 11.—It affords a sweeter content amidst the greatest streights of life, than the most opulent fortune without it, ver. 16.—In a word, is the best instructor in true wisdom, ver. 33.

5thly, Of desire: When this passion is duly regulated by religion, it not only abstains from the greedy and rapacious exorbitance of covetousness, oppression, and fraud, but shuts the hand against the lesser, and more allowed, temptations and tendencies to injustice; is so averse to all unlawful gains, as to shun the very first approaches towards it; dreading even gifts, where interest is concerned, lest they should betray to bribery, and bribery to corruption.—[Timet Danaos & dona ferentes.]

These are the general contents of our Lesson.

The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xv.

1. *A Soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.* **T**HE best defence, as well as remedy, against anger, is meekness. There is an invincible charm in the mild looks, and *soft* words, of this pacific virtue, which shames, or tames, the fiercest *wrath*.—But *anger* opposed to *anger*, adds fuel to the flame, and rather enrages than allays its fury. In such rencounters as these it appears, that true fortitude lies in the mild and gentle dispositions of this truly Christian, though despised, virtue; which is therefore, most properly, cardinal, as it is rather the cause, than the effect, of a calm and steady courage. It receives the fire, and most violent attacks, of anger, but without emotion or surprise: It beareth all things, endureth all things, and overcometh evil with good. To bear, and to forbear, is its character, and its victory. To the roughest chidings of a superior, it stands not sullenly silent, but owns a real fault, by an ingenuous confession, and wipes off unjust blame, by a mild and modest vindication. To the clamorous revilings, and injurious treatment, of equals or inferiors, its only revenge is patience or disregard: And, in all disputes, it gains the better of other's passion, by suppressing its own. Its constant and most effectual *answer* to the rudest assaults, is a good word, or a good example.

2. *The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but* And as a good man's tongue is his own best security, so is it the happy in-

the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness. instrument of promoting the good of others. If it repel injuries by meekness, it

is no less successfully employed in giving wholesome advice. It makes a right and beneficial use of the talent of *knowledge* which God has given, by dispensing the benefit to others with prudence, as well as with charity and meekness; ever regarding both the matter and manner of its words, both time and place, both persons and things; that so it may give not only a greater influence, but such a lustre and gracefulness to its instructions, as may at once captivate and charm, while it improves, the mind of the hearer. — *But the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.* Where the tongue is under no guard or government, no restraint of virtue or religion, what can be expected, but rash or impertinent, evil or unprofitable, vain or hurtful, conversation? See remark on ch. xii. ver. 23.

A continual sense of the divine presence is the best, and the only right, restraint from vice; and the strongest and most encouraging motive to virtue. The world may be so deceived, by a counterfeit honesty, and affected piety, as to applaud them; it may be so mistaken in its judgment of our best actions, words, and principles, as to condemn them; but *the eyes of the Lord* cannot be deceived; they are *in every place*; within us, as well as without; he sees our hearts, as well as actions. The *evil* we commit, he observes in its most secret springs, as well as its effects; in its nature and degrees of guilt, as well as outward appearance; that so he may justly punish: the *good* we do, he as distinctly views, that so he may give a due reward. He is both judge and witness too: No time nor *place* can exclude his constant and unerring inspection.—How should the reflection of God's omniscience, and omnipresence,

534 *The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY* Prov. 15.

deter the wicked from sin, and shame the hypocrite? How should it animate the good man to slight the unjust censures, and despise the vain applause, of men!

4. *A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.*

Virtue is the health, and vice the distemper, of the soul; and both of them are in the power of the tongue. Wise discourse is a sovereign medicine to heal the wounds of sin, and restore virtue; as well as to cure the breaches of peace among neighbours and friends. It is therefore a public blessing, a very *tree of life*; and makes a Paradise wherever it comes, and diffuses its *wholesome* influence.—But he that abuses his *tongue*, to the service of vice, scatters poison and death around him; his breath is more contagious than a pestilence, for it reaches to the *spirit*, and infects the mind; his words are more mortal than the piercings of a sword, for they slay the soul.

5. *A fool despiseth his fathers instructions: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.*

How dangerous is it to give way to wrong principles! The eye of reason is blinded by the predominant passion; every virtue degenerates into vice, truth itself into error, the affections into prejudice: So that the whole course of a man's thoughts and actions is perverted to a wrong bias. First, he turns *fool*, mistaking his true end, or choosing false means to pursue it. Secondly, Grows too proud to admit of any advice, although it come from a *father*, a natural or spiritual father. And of all prejudices, none are more dangerous than those of religion; because they lead to spiritual pride, and grow fond of the ignorance and error they spring from.—Prudence therefore is more especially necessary to conduct our spiritual concerns.—It is not enough to choose wisely, and enter upon a serious course of life; it requires a more

more than ordinary discretion, and prudence, to keep therein; and, above all, to guard well against prejudice and self-conceit. The prudent Christian looks not on himself as infallible in his judgment, or indefectible and perfect in his conduct. A *reproof* therefore, as it doth not surprise him, so it provokes not his resentment, but his attention and regard. Whatever hand it comes from, he considers how justly deserved; as well as the person, the manner, or the design.—“With the lowly is wisdom:” Prudence and humility are inseparable companions; the first judges rightly of the justice, the use, the benefit, of a seasonable rebuke: Humility is as ready to receive it with thanks, and apply it with care.

He that is truly virtuous
 6. *In the house of the* is truly rich. Virtue is not
righteous is much treasure: only an inestimable *treasure*
but in the revenues of the in itself, and its own re-
wicked is trouble. ward; not only the sure and
 certain means of deriving

on us the golden showers of heaven, the riches of divine grace, and securing to us the bags that wax not old, the wealth which neither rust nor moth can corrupt nor thieves break through and steal; but, in the very nature and necessary consequences of things, virtue is the surest and most likely way to acquire the wealth of this world, and to fill our houses with *treasure*. It certainly hath the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come^a. What diligence gains, frugality saves; what frugality saves, liberality dispenses; and what liberality spends, charity places out to interest, where the return shall infinitely exceed the principal.—But *in the revenue of the wicked is trouble*: Vice is ever a bad œconomist.—A sordid selfishness corrupts the use, perverts the end, as well as abuses the means, of acquiring and dispensing wealth. The hands it employs, in manage-

^a 1 Tim. iv. 8.

536 *The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY* Prov. 15.

ing our *revenue*, is either pride, which mis-spends, in vanity and empty shew, what the more necessary occasions of life cannot well spare without trouble and inconvenience; or else avarice, to oppress others, and even defraud ourselves, of the enjoyments, as well as comforts of wealth; it opens a door to a thousand cares, vexatious disputes, yea, want and poverty itself, in the midst of plenty, and is truly the root of all evil; or, if it employ extravagance for its treasurer, this destroys faster than oppression can gather, and wastes in folly, what is gotten with sin and *trouble*; or, if sloth be its steward, this neglects both income and disburse of our revenue, and leaves us a prey, to be devoured by the wickedness or weakness of others.—In short, every vice is a *Judas*; it carries the bag, and will certainly betray: Sells the sinner into the hands of enemies, to crucify and torment; and leaves him no good deeds, no acts of mercy and charity, to plead for a blessing, and save him from misery and *trouble* in this world, nor from the sentence of divine wrath in that which is to come.

The tongue of good men is the instrument of wisdom, to communicate the knowledge of truth to all they converse with; but evil men are either so ignorant of truth, that they have nothing to impart; or so immersed in sense, and worldly things, that they have no heart to say or do any good. Their conversation is neither useful nor wise.

The tongue is also the instrument of prayer; but prayer itself must be the language of the heart. If the heart be wicked, or destitute of a true faith, no words, though seemingly ever so devout, nor even *sacrifices*, how costly soever they

7. *The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doth not so.*

8. *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.*

they be, will be acceptable to God. Nay, they provoke, rather than propitiate or please. They are indeed a formal mockery of the Divine Majesty, and therefore an *abomination to the Lord*. But the devotion of him who is pure in heart, and *upright* in his ways, though attended with no sumptuous oblation, nor pompous expressions, is not only acceptable, but delightful to him.—“The words of the pure are “pleasant words,” ver. 26.; and therefore, when offered up in prayer, never fail of the divine favour and acceptance.—This truth was evident to the light of natural reason; so that an heathen could say (O that we Christians did more pæctically observe it!)

*A soul, where laws, both human and divine
In practice, more than speculation, shine.
A genuine virtue, of a vig'rous kind,
Pure in the last recesses of the mind.
If to the altar with such gifts I come
A cake, so given, is worth an hecatomb.*

P E R S I U S.

See *Patrick* on this verse in our Lesson, concerning the use of ceremonies in the service of religion, quoted from *Melancthon*.

This gives us the reason of the different reception which good and bad mens prayers meet with from God. —If the heart, which is the spring of all our actions, be foul, it defiles the whole man (as our Lord affirms^b) even all he says or does; yea, his very prayers, and every act of religion. But if it follow after righteousness, if it be set upon virtue, which is so pleasing to God; yea, if we so follow after, as to seek and strive to obtain it, this will render

9. *The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.*

^b *Mark vii. 21.*

538 *The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY* Prov. 15.

not only our worship pleasing to him, but sanctify every common action of life. "The righteous Lord *"loveth righteousness,"* therefore cannot but love him that *followeth after it.*

10. *Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.*

The way here spoken of, is that of *righteousness* and virtue above-mentioned, which good men follow after, and bad men *forsake.* To reduce these wanderers into

it, is the end of all those *corrections* which God sends, or the care and wisdom of pious instructors, or magistrates, inflict on the disobedient and unruly; and are therefore the surest token of love, and proofs of kindness. But they are not so accepted by the unhappy truant. He counts it an heavy cross, a sad affliction, an infringement of his liberty, hard and *grievous* to be borne, if he be checked in his career, and restrained from his evil courses, although it be to save him from destruction.—Sin infatuates, as well as destroys; it puts out the eye of faith; then, that of reason; it first makes a man wicked, and then a fool; so that he *hateth* what is for his good, and grows fond of his ruin; he takes him for an enemy, that would preserve him; and rushes headlong upon death, as it were, to avoid life, and to forsake his own mercy.—*He that hateth reproof,* makes death not only just, but necessary and unavoidable; because he makes it his choice.

11. *Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?*

Divine philosophy exceeds all human ethics, not only in the purity and perfection of its precepts, but in the latitude of its objects and degrees, extending to the thoughts, as well as the actions, of men, and regulating our *hearts,* as well as

^c *Psalms xi. 7.*

outward carriage and behaviour. Because he, with whom we have to do, he that is our master in this school of morality, as well as in divinity and religion, is the LORD, the same Lord Jesus Christ, who, as he is GOD over all, must be omniscient and present to all, both persons and places, "He knoweth what is in man"; even *hell*, and the dark regions of destruction, *are open before him; how much more then the hearts of the children of men?*

12. *A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise.*

A lively sense of the divine presence, with a serious enquiry into the state of our souls, whether we be in the way of life, or that which leadeth to destruction, would

thoroughly awaken our conscience to see, by that heavenly light, the errors of our lives, and humble us into a sincere repentance. But pride shuts the eyes, and hates the light, because its deeds are evil; neither cometh to the light, lest they should be reprov'd*. The proud man scorns advice, as a reproach and abuse; he loveth not reproof, because he loves his sins; neither *will he go unto the wise*, to receive instruction, because he thinks none so wise as himself. Such men therefore exclude themselves from wisdom's school: They are the dunces, that cannot, because they will not, learn.

13. *A merry heart maketh a chearful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.*

The passion of joy is one of the most pleasing, and sorrow the most shocking and ungrateful, to human nature. The first, if flowing from the *heart*, extends its sweet influence to the whole body, and gives a *cheerful* air to the *countenance*, beyond all the powers of art or dress; it makes every look agreeable, and beauty itself more beautiful. Whereas its contrary,

* John ii. 25.

* John iii.

grief, has as contrary effects; it not only saddens and deforms the looks, but consumes the body, and *breaks the spirits*.—How needful then is it, that both these passions of joy and sorrow should be under the regulation of Divine wisdom; that both should be well-grounded, as well as kept within their due bounds; that so no joy may flow but from the inward peace and comfort of a good conscience; for that only is lasting and sincere; nor any sorrow be so extreme as to destroy the sweets of life, much less endanger life itself.—“The sorrow of the world worketh death^f”; for it is one of the deadly sins^g, and mortal both to soul and body; but religious sorrow is a sure and sovereign remedy for every other *sorrow of heart*. For he that said, “Blessed are they that mourn [for sin,] for they shall be comforted^h,” has also sent us a blessed comforter to be ever with us, even his own Spirit, to heal every *broken* and contrite heart, and turn every sorrow into joy.

14. *The heart of him that hath understanding, seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.*

As the passions are seated in the affections, so is true wisdom also. The Christian philosophy requires not so much a good head, as a good heart. And when the disciple has advanced so far in this divine school, as to attain to some competence of *understanding* in spiritual things, his heart rests not there, in bare speculation only, as the brain is apt to do, but, with an holy zeal, proceeds to further degrees of grace, and love, and truth. This is the *knowledge* that his heart *seeketh*, who *hath understanding*; and no study but that of the heart, shall

^f 2 Cor. vii. 10.

^g *Tristitia*, or sadness, is reckoned one of the seven deadly sins, because it breaks the spirits, and renders us unfit for the actions and necessary offices of life; the *Greeks* call it *acedia*, a pensive listless temper; we call it *sloth*.

^h Matt. v.

obtain it.—The order of worldly wisdom is, first to know, and then to understand; but Divine wisdom teaches first to understand, and then to know. And as the order is different, so is the source also, as well as instrument: A good head may be the gift of nature, but a good heart is from the Holy Ghost. Of his sevenfold gifts of grace, the *understanding* and *knowledge* (here spoken of) are two, and the heart is the proper receptacle: Without these the greatest human learning is but folly; the brightest parts but ignorance. Let not reason therefore vaunt itself against grace. To boast of our attainments, in wit and learning, without learning Christ, is but the glory of fools, and *feeding on foolishness*. One act of meekness, and lowliness in heart, which he teaches, is beyond all other learning in the world.—See *Jer.* ix. 23, 24.

Here grief and joy are set in opposition; and no one can be insensible which of the two is the most agreeable to the mind. But the difference, here remarked,

doth not arise so much from the passions themselves, which, in their own nature, are very changeable, and come and go according as their objects vary; but it arises from the different disposition of the *heart*. It is an evil conscience only, that makes sorrow permanent, and *ALL the days of the afflicted* to be *evil*; and a good one alone that fixes our *joy*, and gives a *continual feast*. So that “a mind conscious of good intentions, even although success be wanting, affords truer and sincerer joy, than all this world can furnish a man withal, either for the enjoyment of his desires, or the repose of his mind¹.”

Wherefore (we may justly conclude) a good conscience is better than a good

¹ Lord Bacon Adv. of L. l. 7. c. 4.

542 *The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY* Prov. 15.

than great treasure, and estate. How small soever trouble therewith.

our fortune be, religion makes it sufficient, by making us content. But, without the peace of a good conscience, the greatest *treasures* do but increase our *trouble* and care.—The truth of this proverb appears also in the moral life: *Little* knowledge or learning, with a true and sincere piety, is much *better* than a great stock of it, without *the fear of the Lord*: And the reason is plain; because the first leads to humility, which is always content; the other to pride, which is never without *trouble*.

The best welcome at our table is *love*.—Love turns the most ordinary fare into a feast; but *hatred*, or want of good-will, takes away the relish, as well as welcome, of the most sumptuous entertainment.

17. *Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.*

Another passion, on the regulation of which depends much the happiness of life, is *anger*. If it be unbridled, and suffered to grow into an habit, it becomes a continual enemy to the peace of society; it is for ever stirring up *strife* and contention. But religion puts a bridle in the mouth, and ties up the hands of this turbulent passion.—And this restraint is the virtue of meekness; which is as sedulous to suppress or appease *strife*, as *anger* is to *stir* it up.

Ease and rest is a blessing; nor can any happiness be compleat without it; it therefore becomes a just object of our desire. But to seek it too eagerly, or enjoy it unseasonably, and before the time, is the vice of *sloth*. And herein *sloth* is its own enemy; it destroys

18. *A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.*

19. *The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.*

stroy the very end it seeks; instead of ease and rest, it runs a man into greater pains and difficulties, than the most active diligence would have engaged him in. So that, at last, his *way* becomes as a *very hedge of thorns*; either to stop his further progress, or to tear his flesh, if he attempt to proceed.—But the *way* of the righteous, of the virtuous and diligent man, is *made plain*; or, as the original imports, *is raised up as a causeway*; not only plain, and easy to find, but *made* and prepared for him, like the king's highway, *raised up*, and made both passable and pleasant, not only safe, but will assuredly bring him, at last, to his journey's end, to rest and peace.—The difference between the *slothful man* and the diligent is this; they aim at the same end, but they take quite different ways: They both seek rest; but the sluggard begins where he should end; he first sits down to rest, and then has all his toil and labour to come: The industrious man begins with labour; and that being done, he ends in rest. Moreover, sloth makes every thing, even the least things, difficult; but diligence renders all things, even the most difficult, both easy and pleasant. And as it is in common life, so happens it likewise in religion. It is slothfulness only that raises difficulties in the way of duty; but the man of diligence, who is fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, by enduring hardness like a good soldier of Christ, not only conquers the hardest things, but, by practice and good habits, makes them *plain* and easy. And then shall be verified to him, what the prophet hath said; “In rest shall he be saved; in quietness, and in confidence, shall be his strength.”

See Lord Bacon's paraphrase of this verse, in his 8th book of the *Adv. of Learn.*

The truth of this saying
 20. *A wise son maketh a* is grounded on a common
glad father: but a foolish observation, that *fathers* are
man despiseth his mother. generally more affected with

2. *Isaiah xxx. 15.*

joy

joy at the goodness of their children, and the tender passion of the mother most sensibly touched at their miscarriage.—How ought this to engage all parents to employ their most diligent care in the education of their children, and to instil wise and virtuous principles in their tender hearts; the *father*, that he may have comfort and joy in their proficiency and good conduct; and the *mother*, that she may escape the sorrow and affliction which will fall the most heavy upon her, should they happen to prove graceless and vile. And what, to a fond *mother*, must prove the most cutting of all, the children they have most humoured and indulged, do generally despise them most. For a child to *despise* his mother, is a most unnatural crime; but it is too just a return to all indiscreet fondness, which has betrayed him to his ruin; first made him *foolish*, and then wicked.

21. *Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.*

There is a joy indeed which wicked and worldly men may call so, but will prove grief and bitterness in the end.—They mistake the proper objects of their passions; they rejoice in what they ought to grieve for; they grieve at what they should rejoice in. But the *man of understanding* and true wisdom rectifies this fatal, but prevailing, error; he seeks not joy in the gaieties and delusive pleasures of life, but in the reflections of a good conscience he *walketh uprightly*; and there finds that peace and inward joy, which the world can neither give nor take away.

22. *Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.*

He that hastily resolves, before he has duly considered, is more like to meet with disappointment than success. This should recommend the prudence and benefit of taking counsel and advice, in all affairs of consequence; especially those affairs wherein the public

is

is concerned, or the good of others. To rely wholly on our own judgment, in any matter of moment, is the dictate of pride, and none are so often *disappointed* of their *purposes* as the proud; because they are wise in their own conceits, and depend more on themselves, than on the wisdom of Providence: Such God resists, and loves to disappoint. In all that concerns our bodies, our estates, or our souls, God has provided a *multitude of counsellors*, to direct us and advise, as occasion shall require. To consult them, according to the nature of the case, is to consult God; and so we may expect that our *purposes* shall be *established*.

23. *A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it?*

There is no joy more pleasing and sincere, than what the good man feels in making others happy or wise.—If so much good then may be done by the tongue, both to others and ourselves, how careful should we be to use it aright, and so to frame our *answers*, that they may suit both the season and the subject of advice.—Good words, like good fruit, are always best when they are in season.

24. *The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.*

To order our speech and conversation aright; to regulate our manners, and guide us with safety and prudence through all the affairs of this life; yea, to inspire us with noble and exalted sentiments above the level of the vulgar; was the laudable attempt and design of human philosophy: And this the very heathen morality, in great measure, attained to. But Solomon's philosophy soars far higher: The *way of life*, he teaches, is *above*, far above the world, or the wisdom of this world; for it is in heaven, where he, that is wisdom itself, sitteth at the right hand of God, to instruct and to lead us in this *way of life*: He

546 *The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY* Prov. 15.

himself is both the way and the life.—The light of natural reason shewed indeed the two *ways*^k, one of virtue, leading to happiness, and the other of vice, leading to misery; but it could not carry the sight far enough to discern the true and ultimate end of either. Faith only, which is the Christian wisdom, has discovered that end, together with the true marks which lead thereto; even those two invisible worlds, which are the regions of life and death; and by choosing the *way of life*, which is *above*, we shall of course *depart* from that which leads to *hell beneath*.

25. *The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.*

By the *widow* may be meant, one who, having lost all worldly help and friends, flies to God for comfort and protection. Such an one God will stand by and defend: The *border* (*i. e.* boundaries) of those who put their trust in him, will he *establish* and secure against the invasions of oppression and injustice; but the *proud* man, who depends on his own sufficiency, and seeks, by fraud and violence, to raise him an *house*, and a name, has forfeited the blessing and protection of Providence: Whatever schemes he lays, *the Lord will destroy*; whatever he builds, the Lord will pull down.

26. *The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.*

The reason is here given, why God resists and abominates the proud, even because their *thoughts* are *wicked*; that is, all their designs and intentions are grounded on wicked principles. In all actions God regards the motive whence they flow; in his sight, it is the thought only that gives them their true nature and form.—Hence arises a distinction

^k See Annotation at the end.

between sin and wickedness: Though all men, even the best of men, are sinners, yet all are not *wicked*. The good man's *thoughts* are right, but he often offends in the manner and performance of his actions, and therefore sins; nevertheless he is accepted with God, because his principles are good. The bad man may perform a good action, but as he performs it from an evil and corrupt principle, he is *wicked*; and his work shall be rejected, as an *abomination* to God.—But where the heart is *pure*, and cleansed from all taint of malice, or a delight in sin, not only the prayers and devotions of such a one, but his *words*, even the whole tenour of his life and conversation, are pleasing to God.

27. *He that is greedy of gain, troubleth his own house: but he that hateth gifts shall live.* Not only the oppressor, who wrongs his neighbour by violence, but the lover of *gifts* and presents, is here ranked among the covetous whom God abhorreth. The

love of money is indeed the root of all evil; it brings a curse on all iniquitous *gains*. Even *gifts* and presents are criminal and unblest, if sought or received through a *greediness* and love of gain.—To receive a *gift*, or to desire it, is then only lawful, where the motive is benevolence, and when the love of our neighbour prevails, more than the love of filthy lucre, and a sordid greediness of *gain*:—When the giver is prompted by a spirit of gratitude to bestow, and the receiver sees it needful to oblige, by a kind acceptance.

28. *The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.* A good man thinks it time enough to speak, when he is asked; and then he deliberates within himself of the answer he is to make; that so he may speak to the purpose, and for the benefit of the enquirer. But bad men regard neither time nor place, persons or things.

things. They consult not the good or improvement of others, but their own vain humour, self-interest, or by-ends.—The spring being corrupt, the stream must needs be so too; so that *the mouth of the wicked* can *pour out* nothing but what is *evil*, because it flows from a foul and evil heart.

29. *The LORD is far from the wicked: but he beareth the prayer of the righteous.*

God (that is to say, the Godhead, or Divine Essence of the Supreme Being) is ever present to all his creatures, so that “his eyes continually behold the evil and the good” (ver. 2.); and therefore, as St. Paul speaks, is “not far from every one of us¹.” But as he is LORD (which is not only his proper and incommunicable name, but carries in it also a term of relation to his people, as united to them, and they to him, in a reciprocal covenant), he, as such, is *far from* all *wicked* men, and all that hold the truth of God in unrighteousness.—These are also said “to be far off from him, and without God,” because without Christ; “and therefore without hope.” But by faith “we are made nigh to God by the blood of Christ².”—That the style of LORD, or Jehovah, implies a federal relation to his Church and people, appears from what he saith of himself to *Moses*, when he was about to choose *Israel* for his people (*Exod.* vi. 3.) “I appeared unto *Abrāham*, unto *Isaac*, and unto *Jacob*, by the name of GOD Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.” That is, not distinguished by that name, until I entered into covenant with them. For so it follows, as a reason given, why he made himself known to them by his name Jehovah: “For I also established my covenant with them.”—All therefore that forsake and renounce this covenant of grace, by wicked works, or unbe-

¹ *Acts* vii. 27.

² *Eph.* ii. 13.

lief, are cut off from the Lord, and again severed from the tree of life, and driven from his presence to a distance as infinite as it is miserable. To them will he say, "Depart from me, ye wicked;"—"Go ye cursed, &c."—He is no *Lord* to them who reject his service; no God, no Saviour, to such as will not accept salvation on the covenanted terms of faith and obedience.—But as for the *righteous*, who faithfully adhere to his covenant, he not only *bears* their *prayers*, and converses with them by his word, but dwells *with*, yea *in*, them by his Spirit, in the strictest union and fellowship that can possibly be conceived.

30. *The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart: and a good report maketh the bones fat.* There are two things the mind of man takes a natural complacency in, honour and light. They are congenial to us, and were interwoven into our original frame and constitution; nor can we, even now, in our lapsed estate, be divested of the love and desire hereof, any more than we can cease to love and aspire after our own happiness.—This observation seems to be the ground of the Wise man's remark in this saying; it being as much as to say, "It is as natural for a man

"to take delight in the honour of a good name, and
 "a fair reputation, as it is for the eye to receive
 "pleasure in the fruition of *light*."—But the moral use of this proverb is this; light is the emblem of grace, and the eyes of a wise man are reason and faith. If, with these two eyes, we see the heavenly and intellectual light, it cannot but *rejoice the heart*. But if to a good conscience within, be added a *good report*, a fair reputation, from them that are without, it not only is a testimony of our virtue, which cannot but please and rejoice the heart, but even contributes to bodily health, by giving the spirits a more vivid and chearful motion, to perform all the necessary functions of the animal life. So that the body, as

550 *The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY* Prov. 15.
well as mind, is nourished and improved by the salutary effects of heavenly wisdom.

31. *The ear that heareth the reproof of life, abideth among the wise.*

But as the happiness above-mentioned, of a good conscience within, and a good report from without, concurring together, is but rare-

ly to be found, we must be content with the first, though we want the latter. Whether good report, or evil report, attend us in our path to heaven, we are not to be over much-affected with either; nor otherwise covet the one, or dread the other, than as they regard conscience, and the fear of God.—A good name is not to be despised nor neglected; it is a jewel that gives a lustre to our religion, that brightens our example, and recommends our instructions and good works; but must always be sacrificed to the love of God; when any competition happens between his glory and ours. Much more ought all worldly honour and applause be sacrificed to the testimony of a good conscience.—A wise man therefore listens chiefly to this witness within; but more especially to those secret checks, which our author here calls the *reproofs of life*. These he never stifles, nor ever flights; his ear is constantly open to these reproofs, for they are his life, and the best preservative from wilful error, or any dangerous surprise.—The spiritual life is the life of the soul, and conscience its tenderest and most sensible part. If it feels, or dreads, the wounds of sin, 'tis a sure sign that the soul is quick and alive; that we are still in a state of grace, and *abide among the wise*.

32. *He that refuseth instruction, despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof, getteth understanding.*

Wherefore it necessarily follows, that whosoever *refuseth instruction*, (such instruction as so intimately concerns the life of his soul) is like a desperate man, that has

has no regard for life, and *despisetb his own soul*. But he that is wise, is also conscious of his own weakness, and therefore of the need and benefit of advice.—Humility teaches us to know ourselves; and the knowledge of ourselves is the surest way to *get understanding*.

33. *The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.*

The passion of fear is implanted in our nature, to guard and defend us from the dangers that are incident to life; and when governed by reason, and directed to its proper object (which is moral as well as natural evil), it is a faithful watch, and most careful guard. But the *instruction of wisdom*, or true religion, goes still further, and advances this guardian passion to a much sublimer object, an invincible security, namely, the fear of the LORD.—The fear of natural dangers is attended with terror, or cowardice; the fear of moral evils borders upon diffidence or distrust; yea, the fear of God (as God, and considered only in himself, as holy, just, almighty) leads to superstition or despair. But *the fear of the LORD*, as taught us in Scripture (for there alone he is revealed to be Our Lord, Our Redeemer, Our Saviour, Our Sanctifier), casteth out all fear (whether natural, moral, or religious) (that hath torment, and turns it into love. “Who so feareth the Lord, shall not fear, nor be afraid; for he is his hope;” said the wise son of Sirach °.—This *fear of the Lord* is built on the Christian faith only; this faith produces love; love, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed. This is the assurance, the full assurance, of the true believer in Christ; which no other religion instructs us in, no other philosophy can teach, but his, who is the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God. But there is no way of arriving at the *honour* of being of his school, and his disciple,

552 *The* Twenty-fifth SUNDAY Prov. 15.
but by humility. This our Lord himself has made
the first entrance, as well as the first step in his scale
of blessings ^P. And this important maxim our Lesson
concludes with, as the sum total of the foregoing
precepts,—*Before honour is humility.*

^P Matt. v.

On ver. 24.] The antients represented these two ways by the
form of the letter Y, of which see *Lactantius Institut.* And *Virgil*
alludes thereto, *Æn.* VI.

*Hic locus est, partes quâ se via findit in ambas.
Dextera, quæ ditis magni sub mœnia tendit;
Hâc iter Elysium nobis, at læva malorum
Exercet pœnas, & ad impia tartara mittit.*

Thus translated by Dryden:

'Tis here, in diff'rent paths, the way divides:
The right, to *Pluto's* golden palace guides;
The left, to that unhappy region tends,
Which to the depth of *Tartarus* descends;
The seat of night profound, and punish'd fiends.





The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xvi.

I. **T**HE preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. **T**HE literal version of the original gives us the best and truest sense of this text. It is this, *To man [are] the dispositions of the heart; but from the LORD is the answer of the tongue;* that is, “man hath a power over his thoughts, to propose and dispose, intend and contrive, things in his mind; but to bring such thoughts to effect, or even to utter with the tongue, especially wisely to utter them, depends wholly upon God.”—This remark is again repeated in this chapter, ver. 9. (as well as in sundry other places of Scripture^a), as worthy of special notice, *A man's heart deviseth his way, but the LORD directeth his steps.* And, according to this sense, other translators render this first verse of our Lesson^b. Hence our best commentators^c justly

^a Ch. xx. 24. Jer. x. 23.

^b *Hominis est animam præparare, & Domini, gubernare linguam.*
Vulg.

Hominis est mentis compositio, sed a Jova est linguæ responsio.
Castal.

Penes hominem sunt acies cogitationum animi, sed a Jehova est sermo linguæ. Tremel.

^c Patrick. Melancthon.

observe,

554 *The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY* Prov. 16.
 observe, That such sayings as these “do not take
 “away the liberty of man’s will or choice, but only
 “shew, that even the best men may err in their
 “choice, and that the success doth not always answer;
 “for we must diligently distinguish between our
 “election, and our success; and remember, that we
 “need a double help of God for making an happy
 “and wise choice; one, of judging aright, and the
 “other afterwards of governing events.”—But, al-
 though this be an excellent meaning of this passage, it
 does not come up to its full sense and importance;
 which seems to be this fundamental principle in mora-
 lity, and that whereon its true nature depends; namely,
 that the quality of our actions is to be estimated by the
 thoughts whence they arise, and not from their event
 or success.—That the *heart* therefore is the only seat
 of moral good and evil; that the will and affections,
 or rather the understanding and the will (which are
 both expressed in those words, *the preparations of the*
heart), are left free to man, to ponder, consider, and
 meditate upon, every affair; and afterwards, to will
 or refuse, to chuse or reject.—But God has not left
 us the same liberty as to all outward actions, but re-
 served them wholly to his own disposal, to permit
 or restrain as he sees fit. So that the guilt or me-
 rit of any action turns wholly on the nature of the
 thoughts wherewith it was devised, the *preparation*
of the heart. It is that therefore which we are chiefly
 to attend to, in the judgment we make of our own
 actions; and more especially in the study and exer-
 cise of virtue, according to our Wise man’s former
 advice, “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out
 “of it are the issues of life^d.”—This is a Lesson pe-
 culiar to divine ethics, or that morality, which God
 himself teaches in his word; and which human phi-
 losophy could never pretend to.—And, as it lays the
 ground and foundation of true virtue on its proper

^d Chap. iv. 23.

basis, the *heart*; so the consideration of this maxim will most naturally account for the reason and bounds of man's free will.—That our first and chief care should be to correct and set right the spring or first motions of the *heart*:—That God is the sole judge of actions, because he alone sees the *heart*:—That, therefore, we should not censure others, but leave them to the judgment of God.—This will also solve all the difficulties concerning Divine Providence: For, did we consider the true import of this wise maxim, that God judges of actions by their principles, and first motives, we should more readily conceive the reason of the different dispensations of the divine will; why he suffers bad men to prosper, and the good to be afflicted. Taking his measures from the dispositions of mens hearts, he assigns to all their proper parts; the wicked to act as instruments and executioners of his wrath, in punishing other wicked men, or trying and amending the righteous. This œconomy, tho', for the present, so seemingly favourable to wicked men, and so grievous to the good, is exquisitely just and holy, and will be made so to appear to all the world, at the grand audit and day of final retribution.

If we take our text in this view what follows will flow very naturally from it; and then the chief instruction in this Lesson will be, the right government and regulation of our thoughts, which (as we have said) is the main and most essential principle in Christian morality.

It follows then, that it is
 2. *All the ways of a man* not safe for us to trust
are clean in his own eyes: wholly to our own wisdom,
but the LORD weigheth or reasonings, about any af-
the spirits. fair whatever, because we
 are so liable to mistakes, by
 drawing wrong conclusions; pride often blinding the
 understanding to conceive too well of our own skill,
 and

and self-love imposes on the affections to chuse rather what we like, than what we ought. This is the cause, why *the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes*.—His *thoughts* indeed are truly his own, to prepare and dispose them as he pleases; the danger lies in making an erroneous choice of the means for putting them in execution, as all certainly do, who trust to their own reason, more than to God.—The *ways* of man, in this place, signify the means or schemes which he uses to compass his designs. And our seeing no defect or fault in such means, is the common and only reason of all the sin, miscarriages, absurdity, and folly, that happen in the world.—*But the LORD pondereth the spirits*. He therefore that will escape the fatal consequence of making a wrong judgment, or using improper means for gaining his end (which, in all mankind, is the very same, namely, happiness), let him bring his thoughts to God to be *weighed* in the balance of the sanctuary; let their nature, their consequences, their weight, and importance, be proved and tried in the scale of God's word; then let him take his measures, and regulate his *ways*, accordingly.

3. *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

If, in ordering our affairs, the method, as above-mentioned, and here inforced, be observed; that is, if we prudently consider and deliberate before we begin, and then, by prayer, implore the divine blessing; submitting our own judgment of things to the infinite and infallible wisdom of God; and the issue and success, to his providence; *then shall our thoughts be established*; then, and in that case, divine wisdom shall both influence our reason to determine aright, and give a prosperous event to our honest designs.

4. *The LORD hath made all things for himself:*

Such is the wisdom and power of God, that all things are made to serve his will, and

yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

and the great ends of his providence. To the animal and inanimate part of his creation, he hath "given a law which shall not be broken".—To man hath he given a law also; but it is the law of reason; and therefore, as rational creatures, hath endowed them with a natural freedom of will to obey, or disobey. Nevertheless, he will be glorified by men whether they will or no,—as vessels of honour, if we submit to his will; as vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, if we resist it.—*Israelites* he saves; *Egyptians* he destroys, by the same sea.—"Behold we then the goodness and severity of God: On them which sin, severity; on thee, goodness, if thou continue in goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off".—Though he made man, he did not make evil: Sin is no part of his creation. But, although he be not the author of sin, yet he controuls and over-rules the effects of it, making even the *wicked* themselves to be instruments of his will, to correct his offending servants, or to try their patience; or else to be the executioners of his justice in punishing the ungodly and impenitent.—Thus it is that *the Lord hath made all things for himself*, and his own glory: Good men to glorify him, as objects of mercy; *the wicked*, as instruments or examples of his justice *in the day of evil*.

Pride of heart is high treason against God, a declared rebellion; and therefore, not only an *abomination* to him, but the proclaimed object of his vengeance. Whatever confederacies the *proud in heart* may make; *though* his wealth, his wit, his learning, his power, *join hand in hand*, to maintain his pretended independency on Heaven, he shall not

^f Ps. cxlviii.

^z Rom. xi. 22.

558 *The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY* Prov. 16.

escape unpunished. We see then the folly and madness, as well as wickedness, of pride, which engages in a war, that must necessarily end in destruction.

6. *By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.* *Mercy and truth* is the summary of the whole law, as it contains both our duty to God, and our duty to our neighbour. 'Tis by a sincere observance of both

these tables of the divine law of God, that *iniquity* is most effectually *purged* away.—Sorrow for sin may begin repentance; but obedience only completes it.—The exercise of *mercy* towards man, flowing from a right belief in the *truths* of the Gospel, cannot fail of procuring us the mercy of God, and remission of sin.—And it is but reasonable, that a future obedience should compensate for our former defaults; and that the love, as well as *fear, of the Lord*, should constrain us *to depart from evil*, and to do good.

7. *When a mans ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies be at peace with him.* As such a repentance, and such a conduct, is most pleasing to God, so is it the most effectual way to engage the good-will and affections of men.—While we

continue in the known practice of any wilful sin, all things are *enemies* to us; we can have no friends; God is our enemy, by the purity of his nature; the world and the devil, by their temptations; yea, we are our own greatest enemies, by provoking the anger, and rejecting the favour, of God. But, if we make our peace with him, by a true repentance, he *maketh* our greatest enemies *to be at peace with us*; he bestows on us that threefold peace, which constitutes the only complete happiness attainable in this life, peace with God, our neighbour, and ourselves.

8. *Better is a little with* This saying, at first sight, seems to mean no more, than

righteousness, than great revenues without right.

“That a small estate well gotten is better than a very large one unjustly gain-

ed.” But divine morality extends the sense further than that common, though true, observation.—The truly *righteous* man is he, that is just to God, as well as honest to his neighbour: And it is he only that can be said to have a *right* in what he possesses; because he holds it, by a rightful tenure, from the Great Proprietor of the universe, either as his steward, or as his tenant. Be the possession ever so small, as such an one hath a just and rightful title therein, there always goes a blessing along with it. Whereas an ill man has forfeited all right to what he holds, by disowning his Lord, and with-holding the homage and acknowledgment that is due. So that his *great revenue* is but a great curse, and infinitely short in value of the small pittance which the poor *righteous* man enjoys.

9. *A mans heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.*

A man's heart may contrive and *devise*, but it is God only that can give success^h. In all our designs, we may and ought to con-

sult our best reason; but we must not wholly rely thereon. Without God's blessing our wisest schemes shall not take effect; or, if they do, the very success proves fatal, and shall not prosper in the end. If he direct our steps, and the heart be prepared to acquiesce in whatever issue he shall please to give, then may our way be said to prosper well, whether our own *devices* succeed or not.

10. *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.*

In these six verses the Wise man describes those political virtues, which are the duties and ornaments of kings and magistrates.—The first

^h See on verse the 1st.

560 The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY Prov. 16.

11. *A just weight and balance are the LORDs: all the weights of the bag are his work.*

12. *It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.*

13. *Righteous lips are the delight of kings: and they love him that speaketh right.*

14. *The wrath of a king is as messengers of death, but a wise man will pacify it.*

15. *In the light of the kings countenance is life, and his favour is as the cloud of the latter rain.*

is the due administration of public justice.—As they sit in the seat of judgment, they are the immediate representatives of God; and therefore it is said,—*A divine sentence is in their lips.* The sentence they pronounce is, or at least ought to be, entirely consonant to the law of God, which is the rule they are to judge by.—But should they err, through any weakness of judgment, or partiality, the subject must submit, and neither censure nor contend; but rather receive the sentence as from God. For so it ever happens, with respect to the party concerned; God's will

and providence being often served by an unjust, as well as a just, decree; especially where a greater good is occasioned thereby; as it happened in the case of Pilate's passing the sentence of crucifixion on the innocent and holy Jesus. So that, in this sense, a divine sentence is always in the lips of the king; *his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.* 2d. The next care of the chief magistrate is, to maintain the authority of his laws, and prevent all corruption and injustice in the execution of them.—As God is the Supreme Judge, so he is the author of all the rules and proportions of equity and justice (*all the weights of the bag are his work*). He has settled all the measures of right and wrong, adjusted every weight and balance, by which men may regulate their commerce and dealings one with another, and observe a strict justice in the smallest, as well as greatest, matters. 3d. The next care of kings and magistrates is to shew,

shew, by their example, as well as laws, that they abhor all *wickedness*: That it is no less *abomination* to them to *commit* it themselves, than to suffer it in others. This indeed, their own safety, as well as duty, binds them to; because religion is the best support of government; impiety and wickedness its greatest bane.—The *throne is established by righteousness*; but shaken and overthrown by iniquity.—4th, Another article of great importance to the happiness of Government, is the choice of a wise and able council. The advice of men of approved integrity, as well as abilities, must needs be the *delight* of kings, because it facilitates the dispatch, and lightens the burden, of public affairs, and is always safe.—But, 5thly, there is a danger, which princes and great men are more exposed to than others; and that is, *wrath*, or the emotions of sudden anger. As their passions are sooner moved, so are they usually more violent, especially where their power is absolute, and their will their law.—If once their anger pass the sentence, the word is, as it were, the *messenger of death*, and consigns to immediate execution.—History affords many proofs of this observation.—But, as our proverb adds, *A wise man will pacify it*, and lay the storm, before it proceed to any mortal effects.—Nothing but wisdom is a match for kingly power; this will curb its fiercest rage. But happy the prince, who is himself the *wise man* to pacify his own wrath. And, next to that, happy is he, who has men of wisdom and temper about him, to calm his passion, and save him from the guilt of a rash and precipitate action: For, though it be very true, that the smiles and *favours* of a *king is life*, and like a refreshing shower of *rain* in its season, especially to one who may have incurred the royal displeasure; yet none will more sensibly feel the pleasure and satisfaction of a seasonable act of mercy, than the prince, who suffers himself to be persuaded to it.—If it be a reprieve from death to

others, it is *life*, even the sweetest and most refreshing blessing of life, to ourselves, to shew forgiveness at the instance of wisdom, and suffer ourselves to be with-held from the effects of anger and revenge.

Well then may it be said,

16. *How much better is it to get wisdom, than gold? and to get understanding, rather to be chosen than silver?*

that *wisdom* is preferable to *silver* and *gold*; seeing wisdom has often power to bestow that peace of mind, which cannot be purchased by the greatest wealth.

17. *The high-way of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way, preserveth his soul.*

18. *Pride goeth before destruction: and an haughty spirit before a fall.*

19. *Better is it to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.*

The habitual and accustomed course of a man's life and actions, may be called his *highway*.—This highway, or the common customs of a good man, is to depart from evil. And he that makes this his *way*, and keeps therein, shall assuredly preserve his soul, and find life and happiness at the end of his journey. But the way

of *pride* is the way of *destruction*: Where she goeth before, ruin and destruction are sure to bring up the rear. How much better then, in point of safety, as well as prudence, must it be to chuse the lowermost room with the humble; yea, to suffer patiently the greatest indignities, rather than, for the sake of the greatest worldly advantages, to follow the dictates of ambition and *pride*, which lead to perdition!

20. *He that handleth a matter wisely, shall find good; and whose trusteth in the LORD, happy is he.*

21. *The wise in heart shall be called prudent, and*

The advantage of true religion, even in worldly affairs, are very considerable. In all transactions of business, whether public or private, this wisdom teaches the happy art of right management;

the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

22. *Understanding is a well-spring of life unto him that bath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.*

23. *The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.*

24. *Pleasant words are as an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.*

nagement; and so generally compasses its ends with ease and success. But, whatever the event prove, the wise man we are speaking of is sure to be *happy*. If his expectation succeeds, he is thankful to Providence; if it miscarries, he is content. — Thus, whatsoever he doth, it prospers ¹. — The next advantage, which, in this life, attends a wise piety, is reputation and honour. — *The wife in heart shall be called prudent*; the man, whose pious wisdom lies rather in his *heart*, than the head; whose will and affections, whose passions and inclinations, are swayed by just and virtuous principles; whose every word and every action of his life bear testimony to the sincerity of his *heart*, this man shall obtain the general character of a wise and a good man. But if, moreover, he be blessed with the talent of eloquence, to utter the sweet dictates of his heart, by a suitable sweetness of discourse, he shall not only add to the lustre of his own character, but more effectually convey his good sentiments to those that hear him, and improve his own: Thus it is, that he *increaseth learning*; — it often happening, that, by teaching others, a man teacheth also himself. — *Understanding*, as the Wise man goes on, *is a well-spring of life to him that bath it*; It is inexhaustible, as well as sweet and refreshing, both to him that *bath it*, and to those who partake of it: It is a blessing to all. Both the giver and receiver of wise instruction are mutually pleased and happy. — Whereas *the instruction of fools is folly*. As they have nothing but their own *folly* to communicate, it is *folly* to give such instruction, and

¹ Psalm i.

564 *The Twenty-fifth SUNDAY* Prov. 16.

folly to hear it. Whereas the very reproofs of religious wisdom, delivered in a mild and affectionate, yet graceful, manner, are pleasant words; they distil as an honey-comb; they are sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.—But still, as was before observed, and seems here to be repeated, as worthy of our particular attention, it is the *heart* that must *teach the mouth* to speak, and dictate to the *lips*: The heart is the best school and instructor of divine rhetoric.

This is a caution we had before (ch. 14. ver. 12.), and cannot be too often remembered, self-deception being the most common failing amongst men; and there is no access to wisdom until we be convinced of this.—That we are often deceived and imposed upon by others, is the common complaint of mankind; but few, very few, observe, or are willing to own, that they are self-deceivers, nay, that they are more imposed on by themselves, than by all the world beside. Hence it comes to pass, that nothing is more frequent, nor more fatal, than for men, yea, men of parts, of learning, and good sense in other things, to be so mistaken in matters of religion and true wisdom; that, while they conceit themselves to be in the *right* way, and will not be persuaded otherwise, they are going on in the *ways of death*, and eternal misery.—See an excellent treatise on this subject, called, *The Self-deceiver discovered to himself*, by Ch. Ellis; published by Rivington in 1731. See also Muel's *Causes of Corruption, and Remedies thereof*.

The Wise man here (as his custom is to draw comparisons between moral actions, that he may the better illustrate the difference between good and evil) draws the

25. *There is a way that seemeth right unto a man: but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

26. *He that laboureth, laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.*

27. *An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his*

lips there is as a burning fire.

28. *A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth chief friends.*

29. *A violent man irriticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good.*

30. *He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.*

31. *The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.*

the parallel of worldly wisdom, and its pretended advantages, to convince us by the contrast, not only how far short it falls of the excellence and real benefits of the heavenly wisdom, which he had been describing; but that it is of small use to the world; nay, that, in many cases, it is a curse rather than a blessing. The first instance is labour and industry: This, by the world, is esteemed as highly useful and beneficial. And so it is, for the convenience of our present life; but, if it have no further

view, and the man *laboureth only for himself*, it is no virtue; it is necessity only, for *his mouth craveth it of him*; and no thanks to him for all his pains. But some mens industry is downright sinful and mischievous; they *dig up evil*: All their labour, and all their gains, being employed to wicked purposes, or in making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, serve only to promote the devil's interest in the world, and their own destruction.—As to society, which is one of the great comforts of human life, this, by ungodly men, is perverted to the most pernicious end: Their conversation is *as a burning fire to kindle strife*; and their words (as the son of Sirach speaks) “are cloathed about with death^k.”—Thus these blessings are, by ill men, turned into a curse, both to themselves, and all that keep them company; “for what things are good to the godly, to the sinners they are turned into evil^l.”—Lastly, long life itself is no blessing, but rather a curse, if it be

^k Eccles xxiii. 12.

^l Eccles xxxix. 27.

not found in the way of righteousness; where alone the hoary head is a crown of glory: But length of days to a sinner is no other than an opportunity of multiplying his crimes, and heaping up a greater measure of wrath against the day of wrath.

Courage is another quality we are apt to admire: But, in the sight of God, it is of small esteem. If it be the gift of nature only, it is no more a virtue than it is to be born a man. Not

he then, that excels in feats of war, who takes cities, and conquers armies, but he that conquers his own will, who subdues his passions, subjects his understanding to the humble simplicity of faith, and patiently endures the injuries and afflictions of life, is the true hero, the truly *mighty* man.—This courage is divine; for it is the work only of the Spirit of God, and the power of the grace of Christ.

By this sentence the Wise man intends to teach us, that there is, in truth, no such thing as chance, or, what the world calls good or bad luck.—Nothing

seems more fortuitous, or a purer chance, than the casting of a *lot*, and shaking it *in the lap*; yet the event is *disposed* and determined by God. So that we are to understand hereby, that Divine Providence extends itself to the minutest things, as well as the greatest; that there is a particular, as well as general, providence; and that nothing, though in appearance, ever so casual, can happen, but according to his will.—This our Lord also teaches, *Matt. x. 29, &c.* where he tells us, That “not a sparrow falls on the ground without the will of our heavenly Father; and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered.”—These indeed are small things; but, what

what is meant by chance, is still something less; something that seems to have so little connection with any previous cause or design, that we are apt to imagine the event to be merely contingent, a thing as too inconsiderable for the interposal of Providence. But our divine philosopher, and the whole stream of the Sacred Writings, instruct us otherwise, and shew, by many remarkable examples, as well as precepts, that there is not any one event in life, but what is conducted by an all-wise, tho' invisible Agency, and disposed according to the will of Heaven.—This conclusion of our Lesson bears some resemblance to the remark, wherewith it began, of the divine interposition in all possible events, as well as the thoughts, and most secret machinations, of the heart of man. So that every good man may draw hence, this comfortable reflection, that he is not left to the caprice or hazard of a blind chance; but that his least, as well as greatest, concerns are under the constant and unerrable direction of Infinite Wisdom, who maketh all things to work together for good to them that love God.





The Twenty-sixth Sunday after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xvii.

P R E F A C E.

This Lesson treats chiefly of that branch of civil life, which is called Oeconomics, or the art of managing a family wisely and well. And sets before us the relative duties of masters and servants, children and parents.

1. **B**etter is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife.

THE chief ingredient of domestic felicity is unity and concord. The very meanest circumstance in life, the least pittance of bread, and that, though never so dry and unsavoury, yet, with peace and *quietness*, is preferable to the greatest affluence, that is attended with *strife* and contention. Although to such plenty should be added the face and outward appearance of religion in a family, yet, as no abundance can compensate for the want of peace and unity, so no *sacrifices*, or the most solemn observances of devotion, can atone for the absence of charity.—Where envy makes one in a family, it proves a far greater curse than poverty; it subverts all order and œconomy; frustrates the strictest pretences and designs of piety; and embitters every comfort of life.

Next

2. *A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame: and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.*

Next to the prudent care, good order, and wise government, of a master, the happiness of the family depends much on the discretion and fidelity of servants.

As these contribute, by the regular and diligent discharge of their own duty, to prevent all provocations to anger and disorder in the house; so, when disagreements happen among the heads of a family, either between a father and his children, or children one with another, they have it very much in their power to compose or moderate the difference. And so great is the value of such a *servant*, that he deserves to be treated not only as a friend, but as a child, and to *have part of the inheritance amongst the brethren*. If, by his wisdom and good offices, he hath secured the child's interest in his parents love and estate, he may justly claim a share in both. And what greater blessing to a family than such a servant! Or, what surer or more commendable way for a servant's advancing his fortune, than such a conduct! To keep peace himself, is a necessary duty; to preserve, or restore it in a family, is a real service; yea, a merit and obligation, which ought never to be forgotten, nor go unrewarded.—Blessed is such a peace-maker, and blessed the house where he resides!

3. *The refining pot is for silver; and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.*

Where unity is wanting in a family, there can be no comfort; where charity is wanting in the heart, there can be no virtue: But God alone can judge of this.

Men, by fire, make proof of *silver* and *gold*; but the *hearts* of men can be proved only by him that made them.—The Lord alone knows the sincerity of our hearts; and love is the fire, affliction the furnace, wherein he *trieth* them.

The

570 *The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY* Prov. 17.

4. *A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips: and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.*

The greatest disturbers of family-peace are lies:—where these are listened to, or encouraged, there can be no peace.—'Tis the nature and curse of wickedness to deal and traffic in lies; to take in at the *ear*, and retail them out with the *tongue*. Like venomous beasts, it feeds on poison, and then poisons others therewith. A *wicked doer* can take no pleasure in any company or conversation, but such as furnish him with materials for mischief; and, where this pestilent temper prevails in the head of a family, the greatest *liar* is sure to be the greatest favourite.

5. *Whoso mocketh the poor, reproacheth his maker: and he that is glad at calamities, shall not be unpunished.*

He that derides a man, because he is *poor*, affronts the God that made him so (for whom made thee to differ?) And he, that takes an envious delight in the sufferings of others, shall dearly pay for so inhuman a pleasure.—See ch. xiv. on ver. 31.

6. *Childrens children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.*

The next branch of happiness in a family is a numerous progeny. But this is an happiness only where the social and domestic virtues are found.—Good children are an honour and comfort to good parents.—Where they retain their innocence to perfect age, grow ripe in goodness, marry wisely, and propagate their virtue to the succeeding generation, happy, thrice happy, must that man be, who hath his quiver full of such.—In youth, they are like the olive branches round about his table, to bless his eyes with pleasure, and his heart with joy. In riper years they shine in a more public sphere, and lighten the world with the brightness of their example. They beget children after their own likeness, and propagate the goodness of their stock. And, as this must needs be a *crown* of

of glory to the old age of a surviving ancestor, so the honour of a wise parent is also a glory to the children: The blessing is reciprocal.—Every such good old man is like *Moses*, a king in *Jeshurun*^a. And oh! that all parents were fired with so noble an ambition, and aspired after such a crown!

7. *Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.*

8. *A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.*

9. *He that covereth a transgression, seeketh love; but he that repealeth a matter, separateth very friends.*

10. *A reproof entereth more into a wise man, than an hundred stripes into a fool.*

If we consider the qualifications that are necessary for the governor of a family, they are, in general, the four following; 1st, In the first place, every master is a prince in his own house; but he must take care to be prudent in all his conversation, and ever true to his word; because folly in his conduct mars all good effect of his discourse, be it ever so excellent; and insincerity in his words, destroys his authority, be his station ever so great. 2dly, Liberality is

a charm, that engages the hearts and affections of all that serve him; it is like a *precious stone* in the eyes of every one, that hath any share of his bounty. Nor shall the testimony of his munificence ever fail of belief; for *whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth*. 3dly, A mild and gentle carriage towards them that offend: This is a most laudable and necessary quality in the master of a family. To cover, or not see, a *transgression* sometimes, in a child or a servant, is as requisite an art for preserving the peace and good will of a family, as a prudent silence is to prevent a breach among friends. 4thly, A discreet distribution

^a *Jeshurun* signifies righteousness; and the title of king in *Jeshurun* denotes that pre eminence and authority among the people of God, which an exemplary and well-known virtue bestows.

572 *The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY* Prov. 17.

of rewards and punishments, of reproof and correction. None so wise, but may sometimes offend:—Here a seasonable word will do more than a blow. But where the offender is stubborn and perverse, here a sound correction will do better than words.

11. *An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.*

12. *Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.*

13. *Who so rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.*

14. *The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.*

15. *He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.*

16. *Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it.*

The particular vices, which are most mischievous to society, and consequently most destructive of the happiness of families, especially if found in the head of an house, are, 1st, A tyrannical and imperious spirit, not regarding the peace, nor consulting the tempers, of servants or children, so much as his own arbitrary humour and will. Such masters, however their power may set them above the controul of their inferiors, shall not escape the vengeance of Heaven. — A cruel messenger [or angel] shall be sent against them. And what angel is this but Satan? He is the messenger and executioner of Divine justice. And, whenever he is commissioned or permitted to punish, he is sure to do it, not only with speed, but with

cruelty: He exerts the utmost of his malice, as well as power^b.—Neither is it an uncommon thing for an injured servant to be let loose, and permitted to revenge himself, upon an oppressive master. 2dly, An absolute and pertinacious positiveness in actions or opinions. A man of this stamp may well be com-

^b See Job i. ver. 13.

pared to a *bear*: He is as fond of his absurdities, as she of her *whelps*, and as loath to part with them, be they never so mishapen and ugly. 3dly, An ungrateful temper.—This not only makes present enemies, but strips a man at once of every friend; brings down an immediate curse from Heaven, and intails it on his *house* and posterity. 4thly, A contentious and litigious humour. It is as easy to run into law-suits, as to spill a drop of *water* on the ground; but to get out of it without damage, and sometimes the ruin of one's self, and family, is as hard as to gather up that water again. 5thly, Partiality and injustice.—It is not easy to say, which is the most heinous in a master or magistrate, the acquitting the wicked, or condemning the innocent. Both are certainly most detestable to him who is the fountain of justice, and equally objects of his wrath. 6thly, and lastly, An indolent and careless habit of mind, neglecting the opportunities of procuring the advantages of education or provision, which our families have a right to expect; or neglecting to purchase them, when the *price* and ability is in our hand.—This, though no immediate disturber of a family's quiet, is a folly, which, in time, may prove fatal and unhappy, when too late to remedy, or to retrieve the loss.

17. *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*

Another ingredient of domestic happiness is the affection of friends and relations. A true friend is one of the greatest blessings and comforts of life. His love is constant; ready to counsel, help, and assist, *at all times*; not only in prosperity, but most of all in emergencies of trouble and distress. This his *love* binds him to; and even rejoices, on such trying occasions, to give proof of its sincerity. But a relation, especially so near a relation as that of a *brother*, is under a natural obligation of kindred, as well as of common friendship and humanity, to stand by and support one that is of the same flesh and blood with

574 *The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY* Prov. 17.

with him. He is, as it were, *born* for every act of beneficence and kindness, in times of affliction or *adversity*, according to that saying, "As one foot, so " one brother, should help another."—Their interest is the same, and their help and affection should be reciprocal.—Where this harmony of love and assistance in a family is mutual and sincere, it is one of its firmest supports, and the greatest worldly felicity.

18. *A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.*

But although friendship and relation should be faithful and beneficent, it ought also to be prudent and discreet. We are not to ruin our own selves or families, to save another from ruin. The Wise man often cautions against suretiship.—To *strike hands* (that is, to give security and enter into bonds) for other mens debts, may look like great kindness to our friend, but has little wisdom; especially if it be above our ability, and involve our family in the danger. He that does so for the best friend he hath, violates a law of nature, as well as prudence, and may justly be deemed *a man void of understanding*, as being no friend to his own family, or to himself.

19. *He loveth transgression, that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate, seeketh destruction.*

20. *He that hath a forward heart, findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue, falleth into mischief.*

But, if suretiship be a folly which often proves fatal, and sometimes destroys a whole family at once, there are other imprudencies, which, though not so ruinous, yet are continual disturbers of the peace of a family, whether they be found in the master or his domestics. 1st, A fractious contentious humour, that raises disputes on every slight occasion.—Such a man seems to take *delight* in finding faults, and to *love transgression* more than peace. 2dly, An haughty and too lordly a carriage.—Such an one, by *exalting his gate* above

above others, may think it the way to procure respect, but he will find it, in the end, to be the way to *destruction*. 3dly, A *froward heart*, or ill-natured temper. This sort of spirit breeds a constant uneasiness and discomfort in a family, and *findeth no good*, because it takes every thing, that is said or done, in the worst sense, and, like a sharp but discoloured eye, spies out every thing that is wrong, nothing that is right; or else gives a wrong colour to every thing that is rightly done, or well meant; so that he never sees or enjoys any good. 4thly, The consequence of this is a *perverse tongue*; which, by over looking the good we might, but will not enjoy, betrays us into *mischiefs* we cannot avoid: From imaginary evils it throws us into real ones.

21. *He that begetteth a fool, doth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy.*

It hath been observed before (on ver. 6.) how great an happiness a wife and virtuous offspring is to a family. But, as that happiness is very rare, and seldom

complete, the Wise man takes notice of two blemishes which necessarily occasion great grief and *sorrow* in every family where they happen; namely, where any children prove natural fools, and are born so; or when they become fools through vice and wickedness. Here he seems to reflect on the misfortune of the first case; and, ver. 25. he speaks of the latter. To both these afflicting cases, he could not but be led by the like circumstance in his own family, whose son *Reboboam* was foolish in both these respects, having but small wit by nature, and less by grace. This appeared in his conduct when he came to the crown (see 1 *Kings*, chap. xii.), and by the character which the son of *Sirach* hath left of him:—"Thus rested
 " *Solomon* with his fathers; and of his seed he left
 " behind him *Reboboam*, even the foolishness of the
 " people, and one that had no understanding, who
 " turned

576 *The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY* Prov. 17.

"turned away the people, through his counsel."
Ecclus xlvii. 23.

22. *A merry heart doth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.*

As the passions are the spring which give life and direction to our actions, the Wise man, having mentioned the two chief of them, sorrow and joy, in the preceding verse, here he takes notice of the effects they commonly have on the constitution and state of the animal system. Joy, when seated in the heart, and arising from a just cause, some real good, is the most sovereign *medicine* of life, and naturally conduces to the health of the body, as well as to the pleasure of the mind. Whereas grief as naturally tends to the breaking of the spirit, and impairing the health. It consumes the vital juices, *dries up the bones*, and shortens life. But no greater cause of sorrow than bad children; no greater joy and comfort than good ones.—A powerful motive therefore, even to worldly persons, to train up their children in the principles of virtue.

23. *A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.*

To keep still to our subject of oeconomics, or the offices of a domestic life, we may from hence observe another certain bane of family-happiness; and that is, perverting the course of justice by bribery and corruption. This may, perhaps, so *pervert the way of judgment*, as to gain a suit at law, and seem at first to preserve an estate, or acquire it; but will end in ruin and destruction: The juster judgment of God intails a curse on such base practices, and most commonly (as frequent experience shews) destroys such families both root and branch, and blots out their very names, as well as ill-gotten estates, from under Heaven.

A man

24. *Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.*

A man of true understanding is governed by better principles; he is neither biased by interest, nor attempts to bias or corrupt others, in any matter of right. *Wisdom* is his constant guide; wisdom is placed, as it were, *before him*; her he always looks to, and consults in all his affairs; follows her dictates, as the surest course to raise and establish a family: And wisdom is ever at hand to counsel and direct him. But he, that is governed only by mere worldly views, overlooks or despises the path that wisdom hath pointed out, and will not see, nor be led by her. *His eyes*, like a fool's, are ever wandering from what concerns him most; they are *in the ends of the earth*; not only at a distance from his true interest and proper business, but are set upon objects, which he neither sees distinctly, nor has aught to do with.—Like a simple child, looking to the horizon, he fancies Heaven to touch the earth, and longs to be there; but when, with infinite pains, and fruitless labour, he has travelled to the place, his paradise, and imaginary happiness, is still as remote as ever.

25. *A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.*

See the remark on the like saying, chap. xv. ver. 20. But, confining our reflections still to family-æconomy, we may add, to what was there observed, and to

what hath been said on ver. 21. of this Lesson, that the ground-work, and principal ingredient, of domestic happiness, is the wise education of children. If a man beget a natural fool, it may be a *grief*, but is no crime. But to neglect the improvement of those faculties and parts, which God and nature has bestowed on our children, and, by indulging, or even conniving at, their vices, to suffer them to contract evil habits, and run into the worst of follies,

578 *The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY* Prov. 17.

that of a wicked and sinful course of life; this cannot but destroy the peace and prosperity of a family. Other domestics, such as servants and dependents, may be removed if they misbehave; but a child is so considerable a member of a family, and so tender a part, as cannot be cut off without the utmost pain; nor yet, if corrupt, be retained without continual grief,—a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.—And the greater will such grief and bitterness be, if the cause proceed from their own fault and criminal neglect.

26. *Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity.* If we take this observation in its obvious sense, no man is so perverse, as to think it reasonable to *punish* an innocent person; much less to

strike princes for equity; that is, to rise up in arms against the magistrate for doing justice. But, if we keep still to our subject of family government, this case too often happens in domestic life. A partial fondness for one child, and as partial dislike to another, spares and overlooks the greatest faults in the one, and corrects the other for little or none.—Passion and prejudice are not only the worst advisers, but distort the judgment of a parent; suffer him to see nothing that is bad in one child, nothing that is good in another. And few there be whose experience furnishes them not with instances of such acts of injustice in family discipline, and the fatal consequences that attend it.—Many flourishing families have been brought to ruin by such unhappy partiality of parents towards their children, as well as many kingdoms involved in civil war and misery, by the misplaced favours of a weak prince; but, to raise rebellion against a good king (of which we have more than one example in our own nation) is a most horrible crime, that admits of no excuse.

Another

27. *He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.*

28. *Even a fool when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips, is esteemed a man of understanding.*

Another wise art in family management is to know when to speak, as well as when to punish. A discreet man will not always be chiding, or taking notice of every little fault that he sees in his children or domestics. By *sparing his words*, on some occasions, he not only saves himself and family a disagreeable trouble, but takes the most effectual course to secure to himself the character of an *excellent spirit*, a cool dispassionate temper; the credit of which will gain him a greater authority and success in healing or preventing some family disorders, than the perpetual chidings or corrections of others^c. That such a silence, even although it proceed from want of judgment how to manage a point, shall be esteemed a greater sign of wisdom, than the acutest reproof, when managed with passion, and unduly timed. The person, who *spareth his words* at such a time, seems, at least, to have learned that other Lesson of wisdom, that “there is a time” to speak, and a time to refrain from speaking^d: And for this he shall be *esteemed a man of understanding*.

^c This was observed before, on ver. 9. but deserved to be repeated, as an advice of great importance; and what he adds is an encouragement thereto.

^d *Eccles. iii.*





The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xix.

P R E F A C E.

IT is not easy to reduce the maxims and observations contained in this chapter, to any particular heads, or orderly method of moral doctrines, as hath been attempted in the foregoing, and some other Lessons taken out of this book of Proverbs. And perhaps the Church, when she chose this 19th chapter for the close of her course of Sunday Lessons out of this system of divine ethics, had it in view to propose to us a kind of summary or recapitulation (as this seems to be) of the instructions she had before selected out of this excellent collection of wise sayings. To this presumed design of the Church we shall therefore have the more particular eye in our comments on the several parts of this Lesson; yet observing withal every apparent connection.

At the same time we may not omit to take notice, that although this nineteenth chapter be the last, which the Church hath chosen (according to her present table) for her Sunday Proper Lessons out of the book of Proverbs, yet, on the succeeding saints days, she continues still to take her Proper Lessons from this book, and the other
pre-

preceptive parts of the Canonical and Apocryphal Scriptures.—Hence we find the Proper Lessons for St. Andrew's day are the two following chapters of Proverbs, viz. the 20th and 21st, and so on, according as they are set down in the table of Lessons.—For St. Thomas, the 23d and 24th; and for St. Stephen, the 28th, &c. By which we see, that although, in the ensuing Advent Sunday, the Church passes on to another subject, to wit, the doctrine of faith, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; yet, on the saints day, she pursues her present head of morality and Christian obedience; that being the instruction, she more particularly proposes to us from the example of those holy men, and the Lessons she hath chosen on the several festivals which she celebrates, and hath dedicated to their memory.

The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

PROVERBS, Chap. xix.

1. **B**ETTER is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

THOUGH virtue and piety be so superior to vice, as we have all along been taught by the wisest of men, and the most infallible oracle of God, yet so un-

just is the world, and so partial sometimes are even the men of virtue and religion towards one another, that, except the pious man have wealth and parts, wit, and a good address, to set himself off, his virtues are but little regarded. But where men are possessed of these worldly advantages, however vicious and perverse, however empty in their discourse, and foolish in their actions they be, they commonly meet with more honour and respect, than the man that hath nothing but his piety to recommend him. To set

582 *The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY* Prov. 19.

this balance right, and adjust the due merit of virtue and vice, the Wise man pronounces, that how much soever any man may abound in wealth or honour, learning or eloquence, if he use them not aright to the glory of God, or the good of himself and others, he is no better than a *fool*; and less deserving of esteem than the poorest man that is, who is rich in grace, and *walketh in his integrity*. This is the standing sentence of God, by which we ought to correct and regulate our own; and therefore, as of great importance to be attended to, the same axiom is repeated, chap. xxviii. 6.

2. *Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet, sinneth.*

This proverb hath some reference to the foregoing, the word [*also*] introducing and connecting the sense; so that we may conceive the meaning to be, that a good

heart is better than a good head. The knowledge of ourselves, and particularly of our *souls*, which is our principal part, is so necessary, that no other knowledge without it can be a real *good*. Yet how little is this considered! How little do men study themselves, especially their *souls*! The thirst of knowledge, in forbidden things, was the first inlet to man's unhappy fall: And this itch of knowledge has sunk so deep in our nature, that it has generally infected the whole mass of mankind. We all covet to know; but what? Why still the things that least concern us; the things that are in the world, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life; the things without us, not the things within; not ourselves, not our *souls*, which are properly ourselves^a. And to be *without* this knowledge, altho' we know all things else, *is not good*.

He that hasteth with his feet sinneth.] He that thus goeth out of himself; whose affections, which are

^a See Annotation at the end.

called the *feet* of the soul, hurry him from one vain object to another, what doth he, but weary himself in an endless round of sin? This *making haste*, or precipitate measures and resolutions, is condemned here, and in many other places of Scripture, not only as a mark, or effect, of indiscretion, but a cause or occasion of sinning. All objects first strike upon the imagination, and then excite the passions, which run to, or fly therefrom, according as they are affected. But immediately to act, or resolve upon the motions of these inferior faculties (which, as we said, are but the *feet* of the soul) before we have consulted reason or religion, which God hath given to govern us; is not only a sin in itself, as it acts against the order of God, and the dictates of right reason which is the *ἡγεμονικόν* or rectorial power in man), but betrays us into the commission of actual sin. Common observation shews, that the only cause both of folly and sin, is this yielding too hastily to the first impression of our passions, before we have attended to the voice of reason. It is also the chief cause of error in matters of opinion, as well as practice. The passions, being functions only of the animal life, have no relish or discernment of truth, which are the objects of faith; that is, of reason, as informed and enlightened by revelation. So that it necessarily follows, that the man who is led by such blind guides, is like one in the dark, the more *haste* he makes with these *feet*, the likelier he is to stumble, or fall into a ditch—of sin or error. Well then may it be said, *For the soul to be without knowledge, is not good; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.*

This proverb aptly follows the foregoing, and gives us the reason of that unwise conduct of men, which is there condemned, namely, their *foolishness*. And by the expression [*the foolishness of man*] we have a plain

584 *The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY* Prov. 19.

intimation of the weakness, yea perverseness, of human understanding.—Mere natural reason, however magnified and extolled by some, nay, the more improved it is by mere natural means, without the aid of faith and grace, is so far from being a sufficient light, in things that most concern our eternal interest, that it rather serves to lead us the further astray. Yet such is the pride of *man*, and therefore his *foolishness*, that he cannot, or rather will not, consider this false medium as the cause of his misfortunes and disappointments; or lay the blame on that, and his own folly; but repines at Providence for the miscarriages, of which he himself is the sole author; and which are the necessary consequences, as well as punishment, of his own *perverseness*.—Thus carnal men, like true children of *Adam*, are continually acting over *his* transgression. They exclude God from the direction of their affairs, and then make no other use of the belief of his providence, than to murmur against it, and to lay the fault on God, rather than on themselves.

4. *Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.*

This is an observation so very common, and so often experienced, as to need little explanation. Yet, because the practice is so very contrary to the rules of justice and charity, the Wise man hath thought fit to repeat it over and over, both in this chapter and other parts of this book of morals, not so much to excite our attention to observe it, as to shun the iniquity and baseness of the example. The cause of this love of the rich, and contempt of the poor, is not only pride, but that root of all evil, covetousness; which choaks every grace, every virtue, where-ever it grows.

5. *A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he*

This also is a saying that is often inculcated, as a common case, both on solemn occasions

that *speake*th lies shall not escape.

occasions, and in daily conversation. And the consequences are so mischievous to society, and all *lies* so directly sinful against God, who is truth itself, that it cannot be too often repeated as a caution to avoid it; both on account of the great guilt and turpitude of all kind of *lies*, and the certainty of punishment which never fails to attend it.—Here it is said, *He that speaketh lies shall not escape*: But in the 9th verse, where the same proverb occurs again, it is more absolutely declared, *He shall perish*.

6. *Many will intreat the favour of the prince; and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.*

7. *All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth them with words, yet they are wanting to him.*

to see any that *intreat* in earnest the *favour* of him, who is the great king of heaven and earth, and the sole giver of every good and perfect gift! Although self-interest be the prevailing principle that governs the world, it is in things present only; and the things that are grateful to the spirit of the world. But the things which are not seen, eternal and divine, because they are future, and the present foretaste too refined for carnal sense, are neglected, unsought for, or despised.

8. *He that getteth wisdom, loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding, shall find good.*

The reason of these two observations have been remarked before, on ver. 4. But though nothing be more common in civil life, than that all are forward to pay homage to the rich and the great, and to court the friendship of him that is munificent, and *giveth gifts*; yet, in the spiritual state of things, how very rare is it

But, however the world may count it wisdom to seek, and happiness to enjoy, those temporal advantages of wealth and honour; what

586 *The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY* Prov. 19.

what are such perishing goods to our better and immortal part the *soul*? The *soul* can neither taste or enjoy them here, nor take them with her, when she departs into the other world: Nor will she find the like enjoyments there.—Heavenly *wisdom*, and the good things which this wisdom bestows, are the only riches, the only treasure, which the *soul* is capable of receiving or enjoying. He then that *loveth his soul*, will make these riches the chief object of his ambition and his pains. And if so be he *keep understanding*, if he pursue and improve the holy art of acquiring and retaining this heavenly wealth, that pearl of great price, and the one thing needful, he shall be sure to *find the good* he seeks.

This is a repetition of what

9. *A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies, shall perish.*

was said before, ver. 5. and has, in part, been commented on. But there is another species of *false witnesses*, and false speakers, beside those,

who give false testimony in courts of justice, or who utter *lies* in common conversation. These are, the *false teachers* of the blessed word of God; and, of all lyars, these are the most pernicious.—They are of two sorts, and by these marks, and by their fruits, shall we know them. First, Those who pretend to be of the Church, and are not; who pretend to be ministers of the Gospel, without any commission or authority from Christ; who say they are sent, and are not. These are such lyars as are spoken of, *Rev. ii. 2.* “Who say they are apostles, and are not.” Whatever truths in doctrine they may utter, yet are they *false witnesses*, because they bear record of themselves, and their record is not true. The other sort are those, who are indeed within the Church, and duly sent; but preach doctrines, in faith or practice, which are contrary to the truths they have received and subscribed to. These are *false witnesses* of God, as
6 the

the apostle calls them ^b, because they testify of God, what God hath not spoken. These two sorts of lyars are, of all, the most dangerous; because they slay the souls of them that hear their *lies*, and follow them. And therefore against such, more especially, the Wise man pronounces a peremptory sentence, *They shall perish*.

10. *Delight is not seemly for a fool: much less for a servant to have rule over princes.* Delight and folly are two incompatible things; the junction of them is unnatural, and therefore unseemly and unbecoming. Sincere *delight*, or true pleasure, arises only from a conscious sense of some real good in possession, or well-grounded hope; but this the *fool* cannot have. If his folly be that of sin, (in which acceptation it is generally taken by our Wise man) it is the object of sorrow and abhorrence, and cannot admit of real joy or true *delight*; if from defect of understanding, it is the object of pity or contempt, and therefore impertinent and absurd. If the pleasure be forced, and in appearance only (as none affect pleasure more than the *fools* of both kinds), the affectation betrays the hypocrite, and shews the folly in a stronger light. Nothing but wisdom can give true pleasure; nothing therefore can be more *seemly*, or becoming, than where they both unite.

Another remarkable impropriety, and unbecoming character, is a *servant*, or person of mean condition, usurping power and dominion over a superior. Yet such is the confused and disorderly state of things, in this present world, that both history and experience afford many instances of this unseemly inversion of rule and order. What can be more so, than to behold subjects rebelling against their sovereign, slaves lording it over their betters, and men of learning, virtue, and true merit, trampled on, and in-

588 *The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY* Prov. 19.

sulted, by the base, ignorant, and unworthy? Yea, too many cases are seen in common life, of indolent masters governed by their servants, or some base favourite; and of parents, over-awed and ruled by graceless children. But, in the moral world, nothing is more frequent than this inversion of order in the inner man; where the appetites and passions, which God ordained for the service and inferior functions of the mind, usurp the throne of reason, and enslave the noble faculties of the soul, to the drudgery of vice and brutal pleasures. All these things are a turning of the world (both civil and intellectual world) upside-down; setting the feet where the head should be; and therefore cannot but be both *unseemly* in themselves, and highly displeasing to God, who is the God of order.

A man of *discretion* hath

11. *The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.*

all his passions under command; they are his servants, not his masters; especially the passion of anger, the most turbulent and unruly of them all. Instead of resenting, he rather pities, the greatest provocation; because the offender hurts not him, but himself, thereby.—The vain world may look on his patience as stupidity, and want of a due sense of honour or courage: Whereas, to pass by injuries without revenge, and to conquer all emotions of anger, is a noble victory, and an action of more honour and *glory*, than taking towns, or conquering armies. He is the greatest hero that overcomes himself.

12. *The kings wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favour is as dew upon the grass.*

The literal sense is plain, and needs no exposition. But the reducing it to practice is a part of wisdom, that demands our attention.

We cannot but know, that men in power are apter to resent, and harder to be appeased,

appeased, than others. Our discretion then will consist not only in deferring, or, rather, in quite suppressing, our anger, when injured or slighted by them, but in carefully avoiding all occasions of provoking their *wrath*, as we would a *lion* when we hear it *roar*; and using all prudent means to obtain their *favour*, which is as beneficial and reviving as *dew upon the grass*.

13. *A foolish son is the calamity of his father; and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.*

Two things make a man extremely unhappy; a dissolute disobedient son, and a scolding froward wife. The former brings reproach and shame on the father, and ruin on his family; the other forces him to undo himself, by driving him from his home, as from a rotten and ruinous house, which continually lets in the *droppings* of rain.

14. *House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; and a prudent wife is from the LORD.*

This follows naturally, as a proper contrast to the foregoing. Two of the greatest blessings of life, being set against two of its greatest calamities.—To be born to an estate, and have a *prudent wife*, are generally esteemed the top of human felicity; but they are not generally so rightly distinguished in common esteem, or ranked according to the proper dignity of their respective order and degree. The first is indeed a blessing; but as it cometh ordinarily from man, and descends to us in the course of nature, is far inferior to that of a good *wife*, which is a gift that cometh *from the Lord*, and a special token of his grace and favour. Yet the world seems not so to think. In common vogue, a fair patrimony of *house* and lands, and worldly wealth, is counted an happiness of the first rate; and the blessing of a *prudent wife*, though the more valuable gift of God, obtains only the second place. This appears to be the prevailing

vailing taste, from the usual course of matrimonial contracts, where fancy or interest are more regarded than piety and prudence; and, above all, from that too common neglect of applying to God, who alone is the author and giver of this special gift, and best of all temporal blessings. Men seldom make this any part of their scheme, in the choice of a wife; or sue to their heavenly Father for a suitable match: What wonder then to see this state so seldom happy? But Christians, of all men, are most inexcusable, if they err, or miscarry, in this important article of life; because they have not only the law of God to direct their choice, but God himself to have recourse to, for such a companion as shall be an help meet for them, and a real blessing. They that have followed this rule, can speak by experience of the truth of this observation, and of that other parallel saying, ch. xviii. 2. "Whoso findeth-[such] a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord."

It is truly and well said
 15. *Slothfulness casteth* by one of the fathers, that
into a deep sleep; and an sloth is persecuted in this
idle soul shall suffer hunger. book of *Proverbs*. For the

Wise man has it up, and attacks it so often, as if he were determined to give it no rest. And we know no persecution can be more grievous to the sluggard, than to be continually disturbed and awaked out of his *sleep*. Even nature herself is a persecutor of sloth, and will not suffer it long to indulge its beloved ease. If it does fall into its *deep sleep*, she stirs up the cares and necessities of life, and even the appetites of the body, to rouse it up and break its rest. And if it will not yet stir, nor hear these calls, she punishes it with *hunger* and want of food. So true is it in the natural, as well as moral sense, *The idle soul shall suffer hunger*: Both reason and religion agree in this award, "If any will not work, neither should he
 "eat."

“eat.”—Nay, not only so, but the rest of the vice are all in a sort of conspiracy against sloth. Pride envy, &c. but especially avarice, are perpetually in war with it, and for ever beating up its quarters. Of the latter, the heathen poet has given us a very lively description^d. Thus Providence seems to have armed the whole world, and the whole train of occurrences, against the vice of sloth. For what are all the afflictions, and cross accidents, of life, but so many corrections or antidotes to prevent, or expel, this lethargic distemper and torpor of the mind?

The *commandments* of God

16. *He that keepeth the commandment, keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways, shall die.* (that is, the moral law contained in the decalogue) are both the rule of this life present, and the way which leadeth to that which is eternal.

In our holy covenant at baptism we promised to *keep* them, and to walk in the same all the days of our life: And so far only are we assured, that we are in the way to heaven, and that we *keep our souls* secure and safe, as we keep in this way of God's commands. Faith indeed shews us this path, and gives us life, and light, and help, to walk therein; but it is obedience only that carries us on, and at length puts us in possession of the prize of our high calling. To depend therefore on faith only, without works (*i. e.* without obedience) is to *despise* our *ways*, and slight the commandment of God: On the other hand, to trust to works without faith, is walking in the dark, and exposing ourselves to error and falls. Both faith and good works must concur, if ever we hope to arrive at the regions of light and immortality.

The rich are God's stew-

17. *He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the LORD; and that* ards, and the poor his pensioners. To *have pity* on them and relieve their wants,

^c 2 *Theff.* iii. 10.

^d See Annotation at the end.

592 *The* Twenty-sixth SUNDAY Prov. 19.

which he hath given, will he pay him again.

is not so much a charity, as a debt. On the contrary, to withhold relief from a pro-

per object, when it is in our power, is not only a want of compassion, but of common justice. Nevertheless, so bountiful is God to both the rich and poor, that he not only assigns the needy a competent provision out of the abundance of the rich, but an ample reward to the men of wealth, for their liberality to the poor. Yea, he looks on every act of bounty to them, as a loan to himself; and here, as it were, gives a promissory note, under his hand, to repay. And where can we place our money out to better interest, or on better security? The principal can never be lost: The interest is an infinite increase, and God himself is bound for both. Nay, may we not add, that he hath mortgaged heaven itself for our security?

18. *Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.*

Well were it both for parents and children, if correction were properly and seasonably dispensed. It is the surest and most effectual

means (because appointed of God) for curing the vicious dispositions of nature in children, and preventing any evil habits; consequently for preventing unhappiness to them, and securing a fund of comfort and joy to the parents. That correction is wisest and most seasonable, which is used betimes; because while children are yet young, and before they grow headstrong and perverse, *there is hope*. But then, there are two things not enough attended to in the correction of children; whence it happens that correction is seldom administered so wisely and well as it ought. First, It is not considered, that, while they are very young, they are governed only by the animal life, and the brutal part of their nature; that is, by sense only, and should therefore be treated accordingly, till reason has taken place, not only the proper

per season for chastising them, but the manner and degree of correction should be well considered. While they are very young, they are led by sense only, and the mere brutal part of their nature: During that time, and till reason begins to exert itself, the parent is to hold the reins of government, and not to leave the child to himself, and to the conduct of his own will or humour, through too much indulgence; nor his faults corrected with too great severity, especially if they be childish, and follies rather than perverseness and actual crimes. If merely childish, a wise check does best; if wicked, severity is necessary, and our soul (*i. e.* our love and pity) should not *spare for his crying*.—Chastisement, that comes too late, or which, at any time, is excessive in the degree, will make a child rather worse than better.

Immoderate anger is not only pernicious to others, but much more so to the person who gives himself up to it. He involves himself in continual broils; and if you help him out of one trouble, he soon runs himself into another. The excess of this turbulent passion, is like the unclean spirit we read of in the Gospel, which cast the poor possessors sometimes into the fire, and sometimes into the water.

That kind of wisdom only is genuine and true, which will stand the test when we come to die, and which will support and speak peace to the soul, when we are to part with every other scheme and enjoyment of life. It is not the wisdom of the world, or of nature, but that which is from above, that can do this. That instruction therefore deserves our attention most, which will make us *wise at our latter end*, and bring us peace at the last.

594 *The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY* Prov. 19.

21. There are many *devices in a mans heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.*

By this is intimated to us, that the counsel above-mentioned is to be sought for, and obtained, from God only. The *devices* of men are as variable and inconstant as the heart, than which nothing is more wavering and uncertain. But *the counsel of the Lord*, both with respect to our real good, and his own purposes, shall so *stand*, as never to fail of its due effect.

22. *The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar.*

If a man hath a *desire* to serve us, it is to be esteemed, and accepted, as a *kindness*, though it be not in his power to perform, nor perhaps in his capacity to use the proper means: His *desire* to serve us is a *kindness*; the will therefore ought to be accepted as the deed. But to promise what is in our power, and then to break our word, and disappoint, is a worse character than to be a *poor man*, and stand in need of help. *Better* is it to be a beggar, who yet is rich in good will, than such a *liar*. In the moral and spiritual system of things, not he that wants ability, but he that wants the will to do good, is the *poor man*.

23. *The fear of the LORD tendeth to life, and he that hath it shall abide satisfied: he shall not be visited with evil.*

How very different, in their properties and effects, are the fears of the world, and the fear of God! Worldly fear, arising from the apprehension of danger, flies from the object as from an enemy; betrays the succours of reason, and hath torment. But the *fear of the Lord* is the first step towards safety, is the beginning of wisdom, casteth out all worldly fear, and *tendeth to life*. He that hath this holy fear, flies not from, but towards, the object, as towards an asylum, and place of refuge; and if he abide there, he cannot but be *satisfied*, because

cause he is out of the reach of danger, and *shall not be visited with evil.*

24. *A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.*

Here is another lash at sloth. In ver. 15. we had its folly exposed, as it is the author and necessary cause of its own misery. Here it is represented in its character of shame, as the most stupid, listless, and most contemptible temper in the world. Though pinched with hunger, and worried with the importunate calls of nature or interest, yet will not be at the pains to pluck its *hand out of its bosom* to help itself; or even to *bring it to its mouth again*, to take its needful food. It hath neither life nor spirit to perform the common functions of life.—This is the true picture of sloth, as it is in itself: May well therefore be called a Deadly sin; the man, who is wholly given up to it, being rather dead than alive.

25. *Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware; and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.*

Many set up for reformers of the world; but our Wise man points out, in this precept, the only right method of doing it to purpose. The non-observance of which rule is the true cause, why the world continues still so little amended. There are three sorts of persons, who occasion this general corruption; namely, First, *Scorners*, or the desperately wicked, who deride religion and advice, and are therefore past all hopes of amendment: Secondly, The *simple*, who are blindly led by such bad examples, without adverting to the sin or danger, till they see the fatal effects in the just punishment and destruction of those whose steps they are following: Thirdly and lastly, Even a better sort of people, who *have understanding*, and know their duty, but allow themselves in many undue liberties, contrary to the dictates of conscience, and their own bet-

596 *The* Twenty-sixth SUNDAY Prov. 19.

ter judgment.—The best way to reform a bad world, and evil times, is to apply the remedy prescribed in our Lesson, and to strike at the root of those three disorders: First, To *smite* the *scorner*, and *reprove* the man that *bath understanding*, and then the *simple* will, of course, *beware*, when he sees the one punished, and the other reclaimed. By the way, we are to observe, that the proper antithesis lies between the manner, and kind, of correction, between *smiting* and *reproving*; rather than between the parties offending. The scornors are to be *smitten*, *i. e.* either to be cut off, or severely punished; but the careless and negligent, who offend against knowledge, are to be admonished and *reproved*. As to the middling sort of people, the vulgar and common herd, as they are too simple to foresee consequences, and too dull to understand and follow good advice, the only way to reclaim them, and check their further progress in sin, is the strict execution of justice on the more notorious and abandoned offenders.—But secondly, Observing further, that smiting and reproving, that is, punishment and instruction, are acts of authority (and this is insinuated to us too by the dignity of the person, who uttered this precept, namely, a king, and he too inspired of God, as well as bearing the sword) we are plainly taught, that these acts belong properly to magistrates and rulers, in the state or in the church. To the first belongs the office of punishment, according to the laws; to the other, the province of teaching and admonishing, according to the word of God.—For private persons therefore, except in their own families, or within the sphere of their friends and acquaintance, to take upon them the exercise of these acts of public authority, is contrary to the order here appointed of God, and contributes rather to hinder, than promote, that reformation which is so much wanted in the world. And we have dwelt the longer on this point, because of the irregular zeal of many well-meaning, but mis-

mistaken men, who, under pretence of reforming the world, have so often usurped the power, which belongs to their governors only, in church and state. Did Governors indeed do their duty, according to this precept in our Lesson, the age would soon be reclaimed. But, as we see that not desirable zeal in those who are invested with the proper authority; all that private people can, or ought to do, is to pray to God, as *St. Paul* exhorts, and as our excellent Church prescribes in her forms, "That we may be godly and quietly governed;" and, "that all, that are put in authority, may truly and indifferently minister justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of true religion and virtue."

26. *He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.*

27. *Cease, my son, to hear the instruction, that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.*

The Wise man, under the character of scorers (that is to say, deriders of religion, and all things serious and good) having set before us that absolute and total corruption of manners, which makes men vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, and good for nothing but to be smitten for example to others, proceeds, in these two verses, to point out the true source, and first causes, of such consummate wickedness. And they are these two: First, Errors in education, either neglecting a good one, or instructing in a bad one: Or, Secondly, The bad advice and ill example of vicious company. The first, whether it be a defective, or ill-principled, education, most generally turns to disobedience and undutifulness towards the parents, and often proceeds to acts of robbery and violence, *wasting the father*, and turning the *mother* out of doors. And of this we have seen many sad instances, which were evidently occasioned by the foolish fondness, or supine negligence, of the parents;

598 *The Twenty-sixth SUNDAY* Prov. 19.

and therefore, in common opinion, the chief load of *shame* and *reproach* falls on them, and is an additional sting to their affliction and sufferings. Whereas, if after a well-ordered education the children degenerate, and suffer themselves to be corrupted by bad company and ill advice, the *shame* is rather thrown on them than the parents.—But in either case, the exhortation of our Wise man is seasonable and just, *Cease, my son, to bear the instruction, that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.*

28. *An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devour-eth iniquity.*

29. *Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.*

If it may be admitted, that this bears any connexion with what went before, concerning the corrupt state of the world, and that neglects in the education of children is one general cause of such corruption; we may proceed and say, as a sequel

and proper conclusion to the foregoing, that where, through such unhappy neglects, wickedness hath taken root in young breasts, and no good impressions have ever been made in them, such children seldom or never come to good, but rather grow worse and worse, as they grow in years. They have no notion of the guilt of sin, because they have no notion of virtue or grace; therefore are incapable of repentance, and reformation of life. They are *witnesses* indeed against their parents, as we observed before; but though they bear true witness to the *reproach* of their parents, to accuse and condemn them, yet are they *ungodly witnesses*; or rather, as the original expresses it, are witnesses of *Belial*, that is, witnesses for the devil, who is the grand accuser. And, as we have it in the book of Wisdom, “They are witnesses of “wickedness against their parents in their trial.” But, in other cases, they have no regard to truth. They not only despise advice, and laugh at reproof,

and trample on all honour and common honesty, but *scorn judgment*, that is, all public justice, all law and authority, all sanctions and restraints, both civil and sacred. Nay, they sin with greediness; they take pains to do mischief, as others labour for bread; they *devour iniquity*, as hungry men do their meat. But shall they escape the just punishment of such enormous crimes? No: *Judgments are prepared for all such scorers*, and *stripes for the back of these incorrigible fools*.—These corrupt members of the community, like those of the natural body, are to be cut off, when there is no further hope of cure.

On ver. 2. *Is not good.*] See this self-ignorance well described by Sir John Davies, in his poem on the immortality of the soul:

“ All things without, which round about we see,
 “ We seek to know, and have therewith to do:
 “ But that whereby we reason, live, and be,
 “ Within ourselves, we strangers are thereto.

“ We that acquaint ourselves with ev’ry zone;
 “ And pass the *tropics*, and behold each pole;
 “ When we come home, are to ourselves unknown,
 “ And unacquainted still with our own soul.”

¶

On ver. 15. *The heathen poet, &c.*] *Persius* in his fifth satyr. — See it translated by *Dryden*.

“ Whether alone, or in thy harlot’s lap,
 “ When thou would’st take a lazy morning’s nap,
 “ Up, up, says avarice:” ¶



*The Twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity.*

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. lxxv.

When there shall be a *Twenty-seventh Sunday* after *Trinity*, as happened in the years 1722, 1733, 1744, 1749, and generally happens every eleventh year; or when *Easter-day* falls early, on the 25th or 26th of *March*, it doth not readily appear what are the Proper Lessons for such *Sunday*. The Church, in her table of Lessons for the *Sundays* after *Trinity*, hath set down none beyond the 26th *Sunday*, nor, at the foot of the table, given any reason for so doing. This to some may seem a defect; but the truly candid inquirer, on observing the rubric which directs as many epistles and gospels, as had been omitted after the Epiphany, should be taken in to complete the service of the 25th and 26th *Sundays* after *Trinity*, will apprehend, that the proper Lessons, which are not explicitly provided for by the table, are also to be borrowed from some one of the supernumerary *Sundays* after the Epiphany. And, seeing the two set down for the Sixth *Sunday* after Epiphany (which are the lxxv. and lxxvi. chapters of *Isaiab*) appears so suitable to the occasion of the approaching season of Advent, as well as to the subject of the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, which are specially appointed for every last *Sunday* before it, the reader will naturally be led to judge them the most proper Lessons, whenever there happens to be a *Twenty-seventh Sunday* after *Trinity*.

But this choice of the said two Lessons seems confirmed, and made sufficiently plain, from the words of the rubric, which

which run thus; *If there be any more Sundays before Advent-Sunday* [that is, more than the Twenty-sixth Sunday set down in the table, which can never happen, except when there shall be a 27th Sunday in that year] *the service of some of those Sundays, that were omitted after the Epiphany, shall be taken in to supply so many as are here* [i. e. in this table] *wanting*. Now, [the service of some of those Sundays that were omitted] being an expression of general import, must be understood to mean the *whole* service of such omitted Sunday, and consequently to include the Proper Lessons; and, to say the truth, can mean the *Proper Lessons* only, it being expressly provided, that the same *Collect, Epistle, and Gospel*, which are appointed for the 25th Sunday after Trinity, shall always be used for every last Sunday before Advent, so that nothing can remain to be borrowed from the *Epiphany* service, but only the *Lessons*.

This, we say, seems sufficiently plain; but, whereas some have nevertheless been at a loss what Lesson to read for this 27th Sunday, it is hoped this advertisement will not be deemed superfluous, or altogether unnecessary; especially, as it may serve to obviate the supposed defect or omission in our liturgy; at least, may suggest an hint to our governors for amending the rubric, in case there be any material defect; or for rendering it more express and complete than at present it seems to be.

P R E F A C E.

THES E two Lessons treat principally of the calling of the Gentiles, and rejection of the Jews: And likewise set before us the great ends of our Lord's double advent, first to save, and then to judge, the world; but, whereas these chapters have been considered on the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany, the reader will use his liberty, either to use the shorter descant made on them there; or the larger, as proposed to his meditation here.

But, forasmuch as these Lessons (as here proposed) do immediately precede the Advent season, it seemed necessary to enlarge the comment, especially in the lxxv. chapter, as it contains some points of doctrine, which have a more
special

special reference to this season; and, for this reason, to add these further reflections: First, That whereas, by the calling of the Gentiles, an offer of salvation hath been made to all mankind in general, we are to conclude, that the redemption by Jesus Christ is also general, and of universal extent. Secondly, That, in regard the Jews, who were his once peculiar people, have been cut off for their unbelief and impenitence, the like sentence of reprobation will be past on us Gentiles also, if we neglect so great salvation. That, thirdly, and consequently, at this grand and general assize, all will be judged; not according to any fatal irrespective decree, but according to the strict merits of the cause. Or, as the Scripture speaks, “Every man shall be judged according to his work.”

But, fourthly, whereas the doctrine of the Millennium, and the Renovation of the world, hath been questioned by some, and exploded by others, not only as erroneous, but an useless and unedifying opinion; some attempt is made in our meditation on that part of the Lesson, where that glorious event is spoken of (ver. 17.) for reviving what we conceive to be, not only the most primitive, but likewise the most scriptural doctrine, and for rescuing it from the mistakes of the Chiliaist heretics, and the misrepresentation of such as, in the following ages of the Church, ran into a contrary extreme, by too warm a zeal in refuting any heretical mistakes.—To obviate the abuse, and shew the right use, of this scriptural and primitive tenet, was the sole view both here, and where-ever else it hath been touched upon in the course of these Essays. And, as some experience of the comfort and benefit, as well as a firm conviction of the truth, have prompted to say the more, and to dwell so much, on this pleasing subject, it is humbly hoped every candid reader will take it in good part, as designed for his good; and that an hearty wish, that he may be like-minded, and alike affected, will be imputed to a spirit of charity, rather than vanity.

Supposing the opinion concerning the Millennium to be an error, or a mere speculative point, it can only be an innocent error; but the absolute denial of it carries in it so apparent a contradiction to the plain words of Scripture, as must needs affect the truth of revelation, and prove a stumbling-block to the Jews, and other infidels, against the divine authority of the New Testament.—But, as the total disbelief of it (which was first introduced in the 4th or 5th century, in opposition to the more primitive fathers) was soon productive of some pernicious effects; the fond inventions of purgatory, invocation of saints, and image-worship, being, most probably, owing to the mistake concerning the intermediate state of souls before the resurrection; so, on the other hand, while some laboured to gather out the tares, which the Chiliaferror had sown in the field of the church, they unskilfully rooted up the good corn, without destroying the tares.—The enemy, who had sowed them, taking advantage of this wrong piece of husbandry, and so contrary to the wise advice of Christ, for letting the tares to grow until the harvest, lest the too hasty gathering up the tares should root up also the wheat with them, found means to bring about his wicked purpose. He soon taught the Mahometan (now that all the good corn was rooted up) to cultivate the tares only, and to improve the Chiliaf Millennium into a paradise of sensuality and uncleanness. And may we not add, that, to the like misapprehension of the true nature and sanctity of the scriptural and primitive Millennium, may be ascribed the mischievous practices, and horrible rebellions, which some reformers have been drawn into? But, as no abuse of any sound doctrine ought to supersede or discredit the right use thereof, let not the rejection of the Millennium by some, or the perversion of it by others, make the way of truth to be evil spoken of, but, rather, let all good men join the more heartily in our Church's excellent Litany, "From
" all false doctrine, heresy, and schism, from hardness
" of heart, and contempt of God's word and command-
" ments, Good Lord deliver us!" Amen.

The

The Twenty-seventh SUNDAY after TRINITY.

Proper Lesson for Morning Prayer.

ISAIAH, Chap. lxxv.

1. *I Am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not: I said, behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.*

IT is Christ that here speaks in the prophet, and makes answer to the complaint of the Jewish church in the foregoing chapter. Here he is pleased to give the reason of his calling the Gentiles, and even preferring them before his antient people the seed of *Israel*: And the reasons are such, as could not but determine him in justice so to do. The Gentiles sought him, though they had not asked for him: The Jew found him, but had not sought him.—This oxymoron, or seeming absurdity, is resolved into this plain meaning, that the case of the Gentiles was, in general, very different from that of the Jews, and their title to the divine favour founded on a more equitable claim, especially at the time when the Gospel was first published. The heathens had only the law of nature, and mere light of reason; but they had generally followed that law, more strictly and conscientiously than the Jews did the light of revelation, and the exprefs commands of God.—Now that, which both Jews and Gentiles sought (and which indeed all mankind do naturally seek) was happiness: But the only way to this, being pardon of sin, as grounded on the fear of God, and a virtuous life; the heathen (more particularly of that age) excelled the Jews, both in an awful sense of the Divine Being, and the love of virtue; and therefore, according to the

the scant measure of the knowledge they had, had taken the more effectual way to find the happiness which they *sought*. For want of a right faith, they wandered, indeed, in a maze of errors; having neither sufficient light, nor a proper guide, they could not *find*, or arrive at, what they sought. They had no clear apprehension of the happiness they were in quest of, much less of the hand that was to bestow it: The thing itself, they had some imperfect idea of; but *Christ*, the fountain and sole giver of it, they knew not. Him therefore they *asked not for*. They applied to stocks and stones, to false Gods, and false guides; yea, to devils, rather than to the true God. Howbeit, as they were sincere, though erroneous, in their search after the thing, our Blessed Redeemer, compassionating their fruitless endeavours, revealed himself to them, and so was *found* of them that *sought* him *not*: They had sought him indeed as the gift, but not as the giver; had *asked* the creature for happiness under every shape, and *sought* to their philosophers and wise men for truth, under every denomination, or pretence; but had not *asked* for it of *Christ*, who is the truth and the light, nor *for* him, of any other; so that he might truly say, *I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not.*

2. *I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.*

3. *A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face, that sacrificeth in gardens and burneth incense upon altars of brick:*

4. *Which remain among*

The causes are here assigned, why the *Jews* were rejected: They were so far from seeking *Christ* aright, that they even rejected him, when he came. "He came "to his own" [to save and reduce them from the error of their ways], "but his "own received him not." The Gentiles had long sat in darkness, but wished for light; they had eyes, we may

the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swines flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels:

5. *Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou: these are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.*

6. *Behold, it is written before me, I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom.*

7. *Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together (saith the LORD) which have burnt incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.*

ableness of *smoke to the nose*, and the continual provocation, kindled thereby, is likened to a *fire that burneth all the day*.—Hence note we the high indignation of God against the sinfulness and arrogance of perfectionism. The assuming to themselves perfection, was the noted character of the scribes and pharisees, in our Saviour's days: They affected to stile themselves the *righteous*; others they despised, and separated from^b, as *sinners*; and so literally verified this

may say, but no light: Whereas the *Jews* had sufficient light, but no eyes to see it: They had either blinded themselves, by inveterate habits in sin, that they could not see, or shut their eyes through envy and malice, that they would not. They are here charged with two kinds of evil deeds, idolatry and hypocrisy: The first had been the reigning sin of their fathers, and, therefore, is called (ver. 7.) *the iniquity of their fathers*: The latter was the notorious vice of that people in the time of our Saviour. Both kinds are crimes of the deepest dye; yet, of the two, that of spiritual pride and hypocrisy is represented as the most displeasing to God: The extreme offensiveness of it is compared to the disagree-

^b On ver. 2, 3. [Sc. *Despised, and separated from.*] We are told the word *Pharisee* signifies a *Separatist*, because they were noted for separating themselves from others, whom they called sinners. See *Goodwin's Antiquities*.

phetical character of them, *Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.* — The consequence of spiritual pride, in the *Jews*, was their rejecting, and then crucifying, the Lord of glory. And the like arrogant pretence to sinless perfection will ever have the same unhappy effect^c.

8. *Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants sakes, that I may not destroy them all.*

9. *And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.*

Here, and in ver. 13 and

14, God declares the difference he will make between his faithful servants, and such conceited hypocrites.

The proud perfectionist he ever resists and rejects; the humble penitent he never fails to accept and forgive.

—But alas, how small is the number of such penitents! They are here compared to a few good grapes in a *cluster* of bad ones; yet not one of these few shall be lost or de-

stroyed.—An encouragement this and comfort to sincere Christians, who live, in these very corrupt times, among such clusters of unbelievers on one hand, and of hypocrites on the other. God here assures them, that they shall not be destroyed with the wicked: They shall neither be tainted by the conversation and example of evil men, nor perverted and seduced by the false pretences to piety of those who lie in wait to

^c *Unhappy effect.*] This is most remarkable in the case of the Mahometans, who have renounced the faith of *Christ*: They call themselves Mussulmen, which, in their language, signifies perfect men. And those, who, in a late century, assumed to themselves the stile of saints; and, by others, were called Puritans, fell into a like unhappy defection from *Christ* and his Church: In a word, they professed the name and faith of *Christ*; but, in works, they denied him. May our present enthusiasts, who arrogate to themselves the character of perfection, and a sinless obedience, but decry the necessity of good works, consider these things, lest they also fall by the same example of spiritual pride.

608 *The Twenty-seventh SUNDAY* Isa. 65.

deceive.—The *seed out of Jacob*, is our Lord *Jesus Christ*, that promised seed of the woman, who was to bruise the serpent's head, and redeem lost mankind; who, according to the flesh, was of the seed of *Jacob*, and of the tribe of *Judah*.—His *elect*, are those who believe in him; his *mountains*, his Church here, and Heaven hereafter: They, who have chosen him for their Lord and Saviour, shall be chosen of him to *inherit* his *mountains*; to *dwell* with him in his kingdom of grace upon earth, and his kingdom of glory in Heaven.

10. *And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.*

Sharon was the richest, most fertile, and pleasant part of all the land of *Canaan*. It stands here as an emblem and type of the Church; to signify to us, that the Christian Church should become the most glorious and delightful part of the whole world; that this should be the *fold* for the *elect* flock of Christ to dwell in, and to *lie down* in safety and peace.—In like sense, may the *valley of Achor* be taken; but with this further intimation, that, as the valley of *Achor* was the place where the *Israelites* got their first footing in the land of *Canaan*, and is, therefore, by *Hosea* (ii. 15.) called “A door of hope,” so the Gospel should open a door to the Gentiles, and “minister an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*,” as *St. Peter*'s words are^d. This, in *Acts* xiv. 27. is called “A door of faith;” and by *St. Paul*, 1 *Cor.* xvi. 9. “A great door and effectual;” and again, 2 *Cor.* ii. 12. “A door was opened unto me of the Lord.” Which expressions, alluding to the above-cited prophecy of *Hosea*, and to the first entrance and happy settlement of the *Israelites* in the Promised Land, do aptly denote the beginning, the pro-

^d 2 *Pet.* i. 11.

gress, and happy success, of the Gospel, and felicity of the Church.—“A good beginning” (will the pious, but afflicted, Christian say); “I see indeed
 “this *valley of Achor*, which you call the door of hope;
 “but where is that *Sharon*, that glorious and flourishing state of the Church you speak of? Above these
 “1700 years have we waited for the accomplishment of this Divine promise; but alas! what do
 “we hear, or see, or read of, but sin and misery, as
 “well within as without the Church? not only vanity and vexation in the things of the world, but
 “lamentation, and weeping, and mourning, among
 “the children of God; nay, for the most part, greater
 “and more lasting troubles to the disciples of *Jesus*,
 “than to the carnal and profane.”

True, O pious soul; this is the present state and condition of the Church; and hath been so ever since our Blessed Master ascended into Heaven, and went into that far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, even the kingdom which he hath purchased with his own blood. But we have his word, and most faithful promise, that he will return; and then put a final end to all these complaints; that he will then change this miserable scene of sin and sorrow into songs of triumph and everlasting joy. “The voice
 “of weeping shall be no more heard, nor the voice
 “of crying;” because sin, the great and only troubler of the world, shall then be done away.—But when, and how (say you) will this blessed change be?—Why, God himself declares it here by his prophet, ver. 17. *Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth.* Then shall be that blessed change; for then shall Christ descend from Heaven, with power and great glory, to reign with his saints upon earth: Then will his Church be a *Sharon* indeed, and this *Achor*, and door of hope, introduce us into everlasting, ever happy, habitations! Till then, have we
 “patience, that, after we have done the will of God,

610 *The Twenty-seventh SUNDAY* Isa. 65.

“we may receive the promise^e.” In the mean time, tribulation is our portion in this our present world: But the same Jesus, who foretold it would so happen, hath bidden us also to be of good cheer, because he hath overcome the world^f.—And so shall we, if we faint not.

11. *But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop^g, and that furnish the drink-offering unto that number^h.*

12. *Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear, but did evil before mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not.*

13. *Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my*

The common and most obvious observation, arising from hence, is, that God will, in due time, make a just discrimination between good and bad men, between his faithful *servants*, and those that serve him not. That the righteous alone shall partake of his favour, and that the wicked shall be excluded. And this will come to pass, when Jesus Christ shall come to sit upon the throne of his glory; then will he separate the one from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; the sheep will be set on his right hand, and the goats on the left. *Matt.*

^e Heb. x. 36.

^f John xvi. 33.

^g *That troop—That number.*] The Hebrew of these two words, being *Gad* and *Meni*, some interpreters expound them of the two heathen deities *Fortune* and *Mercury*, which the *Jews*, as well as *Gentiles*, were wont to consult concerning the event of their affairs; but the vagabond *Jews* grew afterwards notorious to a proverb, for their pretence to judicial astrology, and telling of fortunes: To deter them from this impious practice, these “curious arts” (as they are called *Ast. xix.*), God, playing on the word *Meni*, which signifies also *number*, tells the *Jews*, he will *number* them to the sword; and thereby convince them, to their cost, that their fortune, and whole success, depended solely on his will and pleasure.

servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty : behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed : xxv. See also the parable of the tares and good corn in *Matt. xiii.*

14. *Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.*

15. *And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen : for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name :*

16. *That he who bleisseth himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the God of truth, and he that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth ; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.*

17. *For behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth : and the former shall not be remembred, nor come into mind.*

18. *But be you glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create : for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.*

19. *And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.*

20. *There shall be no more thence^h an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days : for the*

We have here a description of some of the great events, which shall happen on our Lord's last advent, when he cometh to judge the world. We are assured, that he will then deliver his Church from all her troubles ; that *the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.* But how, or in what manner, these great events will be brought about, is not so clearly revealed, nor, perhaps, necessary to be so particularly known, as to obviate all difference of opinions concerning them among mankind.—We only learn,

^h *Thence.*] i. e. out of *Jerusalem*—No native, or inhabitant, belonging to that holy city, and coming from *thence*, shall be subject to the weakness of infancy, or the infirmities of old age : In which sense bishop *Hall* seems to understand this whole verse.

612 *The Twenty-seventh SUNDAY* Isa. 65.

child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.

21. *And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them¹.*

22. *They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree^k, are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.*

23. *They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble: for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.*

24. *And it shall come to pass, that before they call,*

in general, that God will create new heavens, and a new earth: If that be so, we must conclude, they will be good; yea, very good; for whatever is created of God must needs be so. Consequently the curse, wherewith the earth was formerly smitten, for the sin of man, will now be wholly taken away; and, in lieu thereof, joy, and peace, and happiness, will succeed of course, as in the state of innocence. For, in order to this renovated constitution of a new heaven, and a new earth (if to be understood literally of the material heavens and earth), all other things must necessarily be changed, and become new. Man will then be changed and renewed by a resurrection from death; the

¹ *They shall build, &c. ;]* that is, they shall reap the fruit of their own good actions, without such miscarriages or disappointments, as are common in our present state.

^k *Days of a tree.]* This, according to *Justin Martyr*, denotes the Millennium; especially if we understand it of the oak tree, which, *Pliny* tells us, lasts about 1000 years: and I cannot forbear adding this full and express testimony of the same *St. Justin*, 'Εγὼ δὲ καὶ εἰ τινες εἰσὶν ὀρθόδοξοι κατὰ πάντα χριστιανοί, &c. "As for me, and all that are orthodox Christians, we believe, not only " the resurrection of the body, but the thousand years in the new " Jerusalem, as the prophets *Ezekiel* and *Esaïas* do assert." To prove the resurrection, he produces this very text (ver. 17.) of our Lesson; then adds, what we have noted above, of the days of a tree, that it mystically represents the 1000 years.—See this more at large in *Mr. Mede*, p. 533, 534, and the observations he makes thereon.

I will answer, and whiles they are yet speaking, I will hear.

25. *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpents meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.*

Heaven and earth, by a restitution of all things (after the dissolution of the present frame) from the miseries and fatal effects of sin, to our primitive state of innocence, and a perfect uninterrupted felicity.—The present Heaven and earth will be so dissolved, and so changed, that the former shall *not be remembered, nor come into mind;*

yea, shall be so dissolved, *as if they had never been.* This we are assured by the prophet; and to this agree exactly those words of the Psalmist; “Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the Heavens are the work of thy hands; they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; they all shall wax old, as doth a garment; and, as a vesture, shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed¹.”—And, that this is no allegorical or figurative, but a real and literal change, appears from the testimony, and concurrent evidence, of the New Testament; for so St. Peter, as having an eye to the predictions of the prophets, expresses his belief, and full assurance, of their accomplishment, “We (saith he) according to his PROMISE, look for New Heavens, and a New Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness^m.” And to render this event more undoubted, as well as to give us a view of the happy state, which was to ensue such a renovation of Heaven and earth, St. John assures us, He “saw this new Heaven, and new earth; for the first Heaven, and the first earth, were passed away:” And then adds, as an eye-witness subscribing thereto, “I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven,” &c. And, in the se-

¹ Ps. cxii

^m 2 Pet. iii. 13.

614 *The Twenty-seventh SUNDAY* in the year.
 quel of the chapter, and also in the following, he describes its happiness, splendor, and glory.—
 To obviate the disputes which have been raised, concerning the truth of this wonderful change, or to adjust the particular circumstances attending it, is not here the place, nor indeed room in such cursory essays as these; neither must we pretend to be wise above what is written and revealed in the book of God. It is a mystery, sufficiently evident to our faith, as to the certainty of the thing, but not as to the manner of it; which must remain a secret until it comes to pass: And, therefore, we shall only say, with a celebrated writer on the subject [*de re, non de modo, loquimur*]; that is, we speak of the reality and certainty, not of the manner of it; referring to those authors, who have purposely, and, at large, considered this subjectⁿ, I shall only submit to the pious and candid reader, what appears to be the revealed will and purpose of God, and most agreeable to the divine œconomy, set forth in the Holy Scriptures.

First, That Christ will come to judge the quick and the dead.

Secondly, That the dead will then be raised, and be acquitted, or condemned, according to their works.

These two points are not contested, nor doubted, by any who believe the Scriptures, and all the articles of the Christian faith.

ⁿ *Authors who have considered this subject.*] Mr. Joseph Mede, in his works, published by Mr. Worthington, in 1677.

The Rev. Mr. Daubuz, vicar of Brotherton, his Commentary on the Revelation. Anno 1720.

Dr. James Knight, vicar of St. Sepulchre, his Discourse on the Conflagration and Renovation of the world,

Rev. Mr. Robert Hort, his Sermon on the glorious appearance of Christ upon earth,

A sober enquiry, or Christ's Reign with his saints a thousand years, with answers to the objections usually urged to the contrary. 1660.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, That this resurrection from the dead, will, in the order of it, be twofold; first, A resurrection of the just; that is, of the saints, and true believers in Christ: Next, (when the end cometh), A resurrection of the unjust.

Fourthly, That such saints, as shall have part in the first resurrection, will reign with Christ upon earth a thousand years. That Satan will then be bound, that he may deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years shall be fulfilled°. During this happy interval (we may presume) will come to pass, what is so often spoken of, "The lion shall lie down with the lamb, &c." *they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.*

Fifthly, That, after the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison for a little season, and go out to deceive the nations *Gog and Magog*, and gather them to battle against the saints, and besiege the holy city.

Sixthly, That then fire shall come down from Heaven, and destroy the world of the ungodly; the Heaven shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth be utterly dissolved. The wicked will then be raised to their condemnation, and, together with Satan, who deceived them, be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where they shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever^p.

Seventhly, When this old Heaven and earth are thus dissolved, utterly emptied of its wicked inhabitants, and utterly spoiled; then, we may suppose, will succeed the *new Heaven*, and the *new earth*, which God, by the prophet, hath here foretold and promised; which, therefore, St. *Peter* looked for, as so promised, and so foretold; and which, St. *John* tells us, he saw.

These five last propositions seem plainly asserted in, or deducible from, the Holy Scriptures: but the

° *Rev.* xx. 2.

^p See *Rev.* xxi.

616 *The* Twenty-seventh SUNDAY Isa. 65.

different expositions of some commentators have raised doubts and difficulties, which, at least, obscure the sense. But, notwithstanding these clouds, and our present ignorance of the *manner* of this glorious event, who can forbear saying, it is a pleasing thought, and, therefore, a worthy object of our wishes and prayers.—Nor is this sentiment most pleasing in the contemplation only, but highly comfortable in the prospect; especially to those who labour under the troubles and sorrows of this present life, or who, living in the Sodom of this world, are vexed, as *Lot* was, with the filthy conversation of the wicked; but, above all, it must be highly comfortable to all serious Christians, who are now struggling with the temptations of Satan, the world, and their own rebellious passions, to be assured, that a time will come, when they shall be perfectly freed from all those enemies of their souls, and be eased of all the grievous burdeus of sin and infirmities which now dwell in their mortal bodies, and are their heaviest affliction. This happiness all sincere penitents will be most sensible of; and, indeed, none but such can draw a reasonable consolation from the prospect of it. All those, who love virtue, and seek after righteousness, will be ravished with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, when, with *Moses*, they behold, even at a distance, this land of promise; but much more so, if they can reasonably entertain the happier hope of being admitted into it. This hope cannot but prove a strong incentive to the practice of an holy life, which alone can insure to them the possession. “Every man, therefore, that hath this hope, will, as the “Apostle speaks, purify himself, as he” [the author and founder of so happy a state] “is pure.” He will readily embrace all the terms, as well as promises, of those beatitudes, which our Lord has pronounced; he will count it a real blessing, as well as duty, to be *poor in spirit*; to *mourn* and grieve for his sins and imperfections; to be *meek* and patient under the oppressions

pressions and contempt of a proud injurious world ; to *hunger and thirst after righteousness* ; to delight in acts of *mercy* ; to seek and ensue *peace* ; to keep his *heart pure*, that he may be worthy to *see God* : Finally, he that hath this hope will be so far from being discouraged or terrified by any persecutions, for the sake of his beloved Lord and Master, that he will rather *rejoice* therein, and be exceeding glad, as he knows, and firmly believes, that great is the reward which is laid up for such as confess, and faithfully adhere to, the truth, as it is in Jesus. Who then, that hath this glorious hope, need envy the rich, the great, and the honourable, or even the mightiest monarchs of this our present earth ? Who will need to repine at the hardships and sufferings of this temporal life ? Who, indeed, can relish the low pleasures and amusements of sense, who hath such glory, such joys, such treasures, in reversion ?

O glorious advent ! O blessed state, when Christ cometh to glorify, and to be glorified in, his saints ! From thence forward there shall be no infirmities, either of infancy, sickness, or old age (for so that hard text, verse 20, seems to import) ; for there will be no death, no decay ; but life and immortality reign and endure for ever.—This revolution, from darkness to light, from sin to righteousness, from death to life, will be the last and finishing work of the Almighty, far exceeding all others in glory : This restitution of all things to their primitive state of perfection, will prove the most consummate manifestation of the divine power, wisdom, and goodness ; and be the *summum bonum*, or chief felicity of man ; which, though so eagerly pursued by all men, will never be found, till we arrive at that land of the living wherein dwelleth righteousness.

A P O S T S C R I P T.

TO illustrate more fully this beatific state, and to shew the blessed effects of it, in opposition, more especially, to such as question the use and benefit of it, it is hoped the following extract, from the pious and learned Dr. *Knight's* Sermon on this subject, will not be unacceptable to the reader.

“ As all things were cursed, by the sin of the *first Adam*, all things shall be restored for the sake of the righteousness of the *second*: The Son of God therefore is the efficient cause of the new Heaven, and the new earth.

The several *ends* of this renovation are these;

First, That the goodness, wisdom, and power, of God may be better discerned in his new works, than they were in the old, &c.

Secondly, That righteousness may reign and flourish in the new frame and system of being.—The Spirit of God, which animates the saints, will then unite them together, under Christ their head, in the same knowledge of divine truth, in the same love and obedience to God, in the same affection one towards another, and in the same endeavours to preserve and promote the peace and happiness of the whole. The being of God, his perfection and authority, will be fully acknowledged; his laws obeyed with diligence and cheerfulness; his mysteries understood, or received with humility; his justice revered; his goodness admired; and himself worshipped in spirit and truth; the œconomy of the Word in a body of flesh, the dignity of his nature, will no longer be matter of contradiction and strife, but confessed in a manner becoming those who enjoy the redemption obtained by his blood; and himself be
joined

joined with the Father and Spirit in the worship and praises of angels and men. Religion will be pure, and without the mixture of hypocrisy and deceit; virtue without presumption, love without dissimulation, honour without pride, power without oppression, and knowledge without conceit: No one's abundance will create envy, where every one is full; no one's distinction, where every one is satisfied with his own lot.—Selfishness will be lost in the spirit of love.

Thirdly, A further *end* is, that the righteous may be comforted, and receive a reward for the troubles they have suffered, and the good they have done in this present life. The righteous, in this world, are *strangers* and *pilgrims*; the God they serve is but little known: The city they seek, is not of this world, but one that is to come; hence it is, that they are so little regarded^r.—But, howsoever they may fare in this present life, the world to come is allotted to the righteous, who will not then be pilgrims, but inheritors of it; to the righteous and despised, who have walked by faith in a sensual generation, been just with the fraudulent, temperate and modest in affluence and riches, pure and unsullied in the midst of temptations, and constant and true in times of defection; who have fed the hungry, comforted the afflicted, and honoured virtue in poverty and distress, and will therefore be justified by the Son of God with suitable returns for their confidence and hope. The countenance of those, whom the world treated as madmen and fools, will shine with the brightness of wisdom; and their hands be strengthened with the rod of power, whom the proud crushed as weak and contemptible. The sheep-skins and goat skins, which covered their nakedness, and the dens and caves, which received them in their distress, will be turned into garments of beauty and joy, and everlasting man-

620 *The Twenty-seventh SUNDAY Isa. 65.*

sions of pleasure and peace. The blessed angels, which assisted them in their troubles, as ministering spirits, and concealed friends, will converse with them now without any reserve, as companions in their joy; and will join in praises to Almighty God, for the happy issue of their care and fidelity. And the Spirit of God, by presenting to their mind the beautiful vicissitudes of justice and piety, mutually contending in past ages, to punish or forgive the inhabitants of the earth, will enlarge their souls with a vast prospect of the depths of the wisdom and goodness of God, that will prove an occasion of increase of joy, and of repeated praises to Almighty God for their safe passage to the regions of bliss, through such various scenes of trial and danger.

Fourthly, and lastly, The end of the renovation of Heaven and earth, is, that God may rejoice and rest in his works. God's delight in his new works will be publicly declared by his visible presence shining through the whole, and dwelling with his Church for ever and ever. This glorious state is described thus, in figures adapted to our present conceptions: "Be-
 " hold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he
 " will dwell with them, and they shall be his people,
 " and God himself shall be with them, and be their
 " God. And God shall wipe away all tears from
 " their eyes; and there shall be no more death, nei-
 " ther sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any
 " more pain: for the former things are passed away."
 And again, "There shall be no more curse: But
 " the throne of God, and of the Lamb, shall be in
 " it; and his servants shall serve him.—And there
 " shall be no night there, and they need no candle,
 " neither light of the sun: and they shall reign for
 " ever and ever." For, if all the evils, we can pos-
 sibly suffer, principally arise from the want of the fa-
 vour of Almighty God, or from the power of his

* *Rev. xxi. 3, 4.*

* *Ibid. xxii. 3, 5.*

wrath, how will the pleasure of life be complete, and with what joys will the soul swell, when the light of his countenance shines on the Church with perpetual smiles; and it is cherished and embraced in the arms of his love!"

Permit me to add, what I meet with in a tract, on this subject, published about the year 1660; where, after vindicating the doctrine of the Millennium, and answering many objections, the author has these words (which I heartily subscribe to): "I freely profess, I find this truth so plain, that I know not any thing that can be objected, which admits not of a plain and fair solution."—To this let me also subjoin, what the famous Mr. *Mede* says in one of his private letters: "I find more true contentment in the contemplation of these things, than the greatest dignities, which ambition so hunteth after, could ever have afforded me; and I give thanks to Almighty God, who hath made the light of these wonderful mysteries to kindle that warmth in my heart, which I felt not till I began to see them; and which have made me that, which they found me not."—I will, therefore, most ardently conclude with the beloved Apostle, who, foreseeing these glorious events, cries out, "Amen; even so come Lord Jesus."

As to the novelty of this doctrine, which is objected by some, the same is answered by Mr. *Mede*, and very lately by the Rev. Mr. *Hort*, in his Sermon published in 1748, to which I beg leave to refer. In his preface thereto may be found the authorities of the most primitive teachers of the Church, in favour of this doctrine. The like proofs are alleged by Mr. *Mede* and others: So that we may truly say, the novelty objected is more justly charge-

able on those who reject this opinion, than on those who maintain, and attempt to revive it. In fact, the contrary is the novel opinion. Antient, indeed, but not primitive: It was not so from the beginning: It was begot by *Jerom*, in opposition to the most antient fathers; has been adopted and fostered by the popish church of *Rome*^w; is then one of the errors of popery, and I think the only one, which we protestant reformers are not sufficiently reformed from. Permit me then to close all with the words of the Rev. Mr. *Hort*:

“ The opinion, that I have advanced, which is
 “ the opinion of those who are called *Millenaries*, is
 “ far from being new, since it is confirmed by the
 “ united testimony of the antient heathen nations,
 “ of the *Jews*, and of the whole *Christian Church*
 “ in its earliest and purest ages.—And, if we con-
 “ sider, that the primitive Christians declare, that
 “ they received this doctrine from the immediate
 “ disciples of St. *John*; that it is in itself *reasonable*,
 “ and even *necessary*, in order to render the redemp-
 “ tion from the curse complete; that it is taught
 “ by many *plain* and *express* texts of Scripture, which
 “ cannot, without violence and constraint, be inter-
 “ preted to any other purpose; it will appear, I
 “ think, that the truth, as well as antiquity, of this
 “ opinion, is sufficiently established.”

^w By Pope *Damasus*.





The Twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity.

Proper Lesson for Evening Prayer.

I S A I A H, Chap. lxvi.

After Reading the Lesson.

ADMITTING the reasons, which have been offered for chusing this chapter, as one of the Proper Lessons for this *Sunday*; and taking the Church's intention (with regard to the approaching advent) as having a special view to that season; may we not most aptly meditate on this Lesson, as follows?

The comparison, which may be drawn between the degenerate state of the *Jewish* Church (as described in our Lesson), and the corruptions, which are too notorious among Christians, especially in these our latter days, cannot but suggest to us a very affecting parallel.

But this melancholy subject having been touched upon before on the 30 and 31st verses of *Joel*, we need only add, that, passing by the *Asian* and *African* churches, which, in the first ages of Christianity, were so eminent for their faith and piety, but have now renounced the very name of it, what shall we say of those who still pretend to profess it?—Even that
7 Church,

624 *The Twenty-seventh SUNDAY* Isa. 66.

Church, which would ingross to herself the stile of Catholic, "saying, in her heart, I sit a queen, and "there is none else besides me^a." hath little of Christianity left, but the name; and this she hath so miserably defaced and polluted by her superstitions, and egregious idolatries, as to equal, if not surpass, the idolatrous *Jews* of old. And, oh! that we, who protest against her errors, and have reformed our doctrines, were likewise reformed in our lives! But, alas! do we not follow her still in her moral corruptions? have we not changed the superstitions and erroneous tenets of popery, for the more provoking sins of infidelity and profaneness? Have we not run from the boasted unity of the *Romish* church, into unchristian divisions, by our unreasonable schisms, and even more detestable heresies, than those we are charged with by that church? Have we not cast off not only the form, and even shew of piety and holiness, but (amongst too many of us) the very principles of conscience, and common honesty?—And will not God visit for these things? will not his soul be avenged on such a people as this?—Surely he will, —except we repent.—But, when he doth come to visit and punish us for our sins, as he did the reprobate *Jews*, let our poor afflicted Church say, to those who hate or despise her (whether they be foreign or domestic enemies), "Rejoice not against me, O "mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit "in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I "have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, "Ec^b."—The threatenings of judgment, on the impenitent *Jews*, which we read of in our Lesson, have been executed upon them in full measure; we have, therefore, too much cause to expect the like punishment; sooner, it may be, than some seem to think, or than others will believe, till they feel it: Never-

^a See Rev. xviii. and Isa. xlvii.

^b Micah vii. 8, 9, 10, 11.

theless let not those, who love our dear Church, and are still her faithful children, cast away their hope, and despair of deliverance: When their Lord shall have corrected them, and *rendered a recompence to his* [and their] enemies, there will be a *remnant* left, that shall escape; a *remnant* will be preserved,—if not in this world, in a much better: These, as promised (in our Lesson) will have a *sign set upon them* (that is, some mark to distinguish them from the wicked); and that they shall be brought *upon horses and chariots* (by which, we may presume, is meant the holy angels, those chariots of *Israel*, and the horsemen thereof, which carried *Elijah* up to Heaven): Such will be the glorious equipage for conveying the saints to what God calls here his *holy mountain*, and which, in the New Testament, he calls the *Jerusalem* which is from above, the holy city, which is to come down from Heaven,—as it were, to meet and receive her blessed inhabitants.

What follows in our Lesson, is a wonderful promise, which we can little understand at this time; nor ever shall have a full conception of, until it comes to pass: Yet, to confirm this promise, the certainty of it is compared to the eternal duration of the new Heaven, and the new earth, which God saith he would *make*, and which (as he adds) should *remain* before him.

I tremble with an holy awe, between hope and fear, at the thought which arises, upon reading this and the following verse; where it is said, *It shall come to pass, that from one moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD, &c.*—This seems, as we said before, to assert the Eternity of that beatific state, which, in our Morning Lesson, is called, *the new Heavens, and the new Earth*.—But, whether this means, that the saints and children of the resurrection^c, who are

^c As they are called *Luke xx. 36.*

626 *The* Twenty-seventh SUNDAY, &c. Isa. 66.

to inherit the new earth, will, at certain stated times, assemble together to pay their homage to God, is as yet, too mysterious for us to determine, although some divines seem to be of that opinion, and it seems plainly favoured by our Lesson; yet it cannot but be a pleasing thought, especially to such as “love the present habitation of God’s house, and the place where his honour dwelleth:” How can they but rejoice, when they hear of, and even hope to see (what now they so seldom do), the divine service performed with that perfect order and decorum which it deserves, and wherewith it ought to be.—O come, come that blessed state that glorious kingdom of God, which we daily pray for^d; that blessed time, when his will shall be “done upon earth, as it is in Heaven.”—May such meditations as these, so warm our hearts, as to fit and prepare us for the due celebration of the approaching season of *Advent*; and thereby qualify us for an happy admission into the eternal joy of our Lord at his second and most *glorious appearing*, “That we may see the felicity of his chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of his people, and give thanks with his inheritance.” *Psalms* cvi. *Amen*: So be it.

^d In the Lord’s Prayer.



INDEX



I N D E X.

A.

- A** *ARON* makes a golden calf, II. 553—555.
———his excuses, II. 562.
Abraham, an emblem of Christ, I. 340—342.
———of perfect obedience, II. 128.
———his entertaining the angels, a type of the whole christian doctrine, III. 367—369.
Abram, called by God, II. 96.
———his life, the figure of that of a christian, *ibid.*
———blessed by God, II. 97.
———the father of the faithful, *ibid.*
———goes to *Canaan*, II. 98, 99.
———God appears to him at *Moreh*, II. 100.
———reward of his faith, I. 342. II. 136, 375.
———*Lot* saved for his sake, II. 135, III. 373, 374.
———tried by God, III. 127.
———urged to offer his son, III. 128, 374.
———ditto, his tenth trial, III. 128, 374.
———history of that sacrifice, III. 128—136, 372—375.
———his great faith, III. 129.
Abstinence, a degree of virtue, IV. 213—225.
Adam created, II. 18. See *Man*.
Advantages, those which good men have over the bad, IV. 504—529.
Advent, the meaning of the word, I. 1.
———sense and use of its proper lessons, *ibid.*
———institution very antient, *ibid.*
———design, of its institution, I. 35.
———the several, of Christ distinguished, I. 3, 38, 66, 106, 107.
———the second, of Christ to save and to judge, I. 42, 64, 66.
Advice, neglected from a bad man, IV. 15.
Adultery, its sin, III. 546.
Affliction, either kills or cures, I. 8.
———why sometimes withheld, *ibid.*
———where it works no repentance, *ibid.*
———design of it, I. 18, 82.
———consolation under it, whence, I. 81, 82.
———intermixed with mercies, I. 129.
Abab's, covetousness, IV. 85—88.

I N D E X.

- Ahab* threatened with vengeance, IV. 91, 92.
 —has a present reprieve on a slight repentance, IV. 93—95.
 —slain, IV. 101.
Air, created, and made a barrier between the waters above and beneath, II. 10.
Allegories, the use of them in explaining the scriptures, Pref. 22—25.
 —defended, *ibid.*
Alliances, not to be broken where confirmed on oath, IV. 1—12.
Angels, worship of them, and of saints condemned, I. 233, 234.
 —their song at the birth of Christ, I. 238.
 —mourn for the fall, and rejoice at the conversion of man, I. 395.
 —food, what, II. 510, 511.
Anger, holy, what, II. 561.
 —the right use of that passion, IV. 530, 542—567.
Animals, created, II. 16—18.
Apology for the stile of these Essays, Pref. 29.
Apostles, and first christians, their characters foretold, I. 116, 117.
Arianism, true idolatry, III. 393.
Armies, invading, by whom commanded, I. 46.
 —emblems of spiritual enemies, I. 47.
Ark, how formed, II. 69.
 —an emblem of the church, *ibid.*
 —the tzohar, (or luminous substance) in it, emblem of the light of natural reason, II. 75.
Arrogance, to be conquered, III. 148—159.
Ash-Wednesday, its proper lessons, Pref. 18.
Astrology, judicial, exploded, III. 450, 451.
Ascension-day, lessons for, III. 160—203.
 —of Christ, its history, III. 172—184.
 —of *Elijah*, III. 182—193.
Avarice punished, IV. 119—121.
Augustus Cæsar, universal peace in his reign, I. 141, 142.
 —his decree, an instrument to fulfil the decree of God, I. 145.

B.

- BALAAH* hired to curse the *Israelites*, III. 25.
 —history of his proceedings, III. 25—38.
 —his ass speaking, a real miracle, III. 27, 28.
Baptism, vow made therein, threefold, I. 2—12, 168.
 —its observance recommended, I. 2—12.
 —our propensity to depart from it, *ibid.*
 —the consequences of departing from it, I. 91—95.
 —power and efficacy of it, I. 85.
 —its necessity and benefits, I. 127, 166, 167, 316.
 —duly performed, the sure mark of a christian, I. 215.
Baptism,

I N D E X.

Baptism, the new name, water, and spirit, given therein, foretold, I.

315.

— of *Cornelius* and his family, III. 247, 248.

Belief, the first step to christian repentance, III. 268.

Benevolence inculcated, IV. 451—470.

Bishop, why this name given to the rulers of the church, I. 282, 283.

Blessing of God's priests, operative, III. 473.

Blood forbidden to be eaten, II. 84, 85.

—shedding thereof, first forbidden, II. 85.

Bread from heaven, what, II. 510, 511.

Brooding, meaning of that word, II. 7.

Burial of the dead, a real charity, IV. 9, 11.

C.

CAIN, excommunication, probably the mark set upon him, II. 60, 61.

Ceremonial Law, III. 113—123.

Charity to our neighbours, the second means of repentance, II. 88. IV. 451—470.

—the true marks thereof, II. 80.

—to strangers, recommended, I. 222. IV. 451—470.

—should attend fasting, I. 401—403.

—what, III. 299—310.

—a proof of true repentance, III. 554.

Chastity inculcated, IV. 451, 470.

Children of men, the children of the ungodly, II. 60.

—of light, who, II. 78.

—three, cast in the fiery furnace, and their deliverance, IV. 228—235.

Christ, stiled *Lord* in the scripture, I. 26—28.

—*Jehovah*, ———— I. 38, 39, 70, 74, 78, 150.

—anointed, ———— I. 39.

—the vine, ———— *ibid.*

—his kingdom foretold in the same words, both by *Isaiah* and *Micah*, I. 26, 27.

—how erected, I. 32.

—the nature and effects of it, I. 113—116.

—the desire of all nations, I. 278.

—manifest, yet hidden, how, II. 293, 294.

—his human nature, stiled the house of God's glory, I. 277.

—his kingdom shall increase, I. 285.

—his name *Jah* explained, I. 78.

—the door of the church, I. 280.

—the light of the world, I. 241.

—the sun of righteousness, I. 107.

—the mighty God, I. 136, 142.

I N D E X.

- *Christ* proved to be God, against the *Arians*, I. 150, 223, 227, 228, 316—321.
- is a king, I. 138.
- king of kings and lord of lords, I. 223, 224, 317—326.
- to be worshipped as God, I. 66, 67.
- when to be acknowledged as such, I. 70, 71.
- his judgments and mercies evince him to be God, I. 68.
- why said to come from far, and in the night, I. 107—109.
- his incarnation, deeply mysterious, I. 151, 152.
- his kingdom, seated in the soul, I. 114.
- the manner of his victories over his enemies described, I. 135, 136.
- his divinity, I. 128, 137—141.
- his kingdom, characteristics of, I. 143.
- his title of everlasting Father, distinguished from that of God the Father, I. 140.
- the prince of peace, I. 141.
- his birth, and its effects on man, I. 147, 148.
- the memorial of it should never cease, I. 253.
- *David*, a type and name of, I. 143.
- his twofold nature, I. 34, 146, 147, 159—161, 244, 245, 312—338
- our perfect example, I. 147.
- the end and design of his incarnation, I. 164, 168, 399.
- his mercy shewed for the glory of God, not the deserts of man, I. 144.
- ascribed to God the Father and the Son, I. 164—166, 269.
- his conception by a virgin, a sign which God only could give, I. 157.
- a general expectation of that event proved, I. 159.
- how given for a covenant, I. 299.
- equal in nature, altho' inferior in office to God the Father, I. 242.
- first preached the gospel to *Adam*, *Abraham*, &c. I. 245.
- challengeth the heathen gods, I. 249.
- his Deity asserted by the first person, by whom the denial will be avenged, I. 253—257.
- farther proved, I. 310, 311.
- denied by the *Jews*, I. 266.
- his property, it is to blot out transgressions, I. 268, 269.
- his manifestation, I. 271, 272, 286.
- his consecration to the priesthood, by which God is reconciled to man, I. 288.
- his character and office, how far imitable by us, I. 225—299.
- the creator and preserver of man from his birth, I. 330.
- new made us again, *ibid.*
- the arm of God which bears us, I. 331.
- like to, and *one* with the eternal Father, I. 331, 332.
- the worship of as God, the trial of the angels, as the apple was of man, I. 332.

I N D E X.

- Christ*, his arms are justice and mercy, I. 344.
 —is stiled the arm of the Lord, I. 354—356.
 —is our peace, I. 396.
 —and his people, called *Jacob*, *Israel*, and *Jeshurun*, I. 312—323.
 —nature, certainty and efficacy of his sacerdotal offices, II. 278—288.
 —his sufferings began at the corruption of mankind, II. 260—266.
 —faith in his merits, the only way to salvation, II. 291—301.
 —his last supper,—is betrayed, II. 334—336.
 —his church, eternal, II. 361.
 —the second *Abraham*, II. 363.
 —his incarnation a new thing, II. 350.
 —typified by *Isaac*, II. 366.
 —a type of man's redemption, II. 367.
 —his passion foretold in every circumstance, II. 378—390.
 —his sufferings and death, a meditation thereon, II. 391—395.
 —his humility, II. 391.
 —his charity, liberality, piety, and submission, II. 392.
 —his meekness, II. 393.
 —his descent into hell, commemorated on *Easter-Eve*, II. 396.
 —————its meaning, II. 396—402.
 —his burial, meditations thereon, II. 421—426.
 —the true passover, II. 441.
 —his resurrection, commemorated on *Easter-Sunday*, II. 464, 465.
 —————application and use thereof, 466—475.
 —his coming predicted, III. 249—258. IV. 165, 167.
Christians, marked with the blood of Christ, II. 449.
Church, the Lord's house, I. 26.
 —why represented by a mountain, I. 26, 69, 71.
 —*Jewish*, their lessons and service the model of the christians, Pref. 3, 4.
 —the school of Christ, Pref. 5.
 —why compared to a city, I. 15—17.
 —————to a wife, *ibid.*
 —reasons for her apostacy, I. 17.
 —catholic, her doors ever open to the penitent, I. 280, 281.
 —represented by a vineyard, I. 38.
 —fences of it, both within and without, I. 39.
 —why called a virgin, I. 175.
 —its walls and bulwarks. what, I. 75, 76.
 —the residence of the *Shechinah*, I. 70.
 —the last dispensation, which shall triumph over all enemies, I. 71—73.
 —prefigured by paradise, II. 57.
 —————by *Sarai*, I. 340, 341, II. 104.
 —the spouse of Christ, II. 105.
 —its privileges, I. 123, 124.

I N D E X.

- Church*, invariable in substance, yet changed in circumstances, name and condition, I. 306.
- consolation of its mourning members, surprising, I. 306.
 - to be protected and avenged by Christ her spouse, I. 308.
 - calls on Christ for strength, I. 347.
 - his answer, I. 347, 348.
 - danger of being excluded from it, I. 382.
 - why forsaken sometimes, I. 382, 383.
 - fallible, II. 555.
- Church of England*, her systems and principles preferable to that of *Geneva*, and other foreign churches, Pref. 20, 21.
- derived from scripture and the antient fathers, Pref. 23.
 - her former desolation and present danger, from an impure mixture of doctrines, Pref. 21.
 - her year when commenced, I. 4.
 - her theology, how best to be understood, Pref. 24.
 - the blessing of hearing her voice, *ibid.*
 - her choice of proper lessons the best key to their sense, I. 65, 66.
 - her design in the lessons for the three *Sundays* before *Lent*, II. 5.
 - in the office for *Christmas-Day*, I. 128, 137—141.
 - her reasons for separating from that of *Rome*, I. 389.
- Circumcision*, the manner and nature of it, I. 195.
- its effects, prefiguration of baptism, abolishment and change, I. 195—231.
- Cities* of refuge established, III. 91—93.
- Clergy* and *laity*, how represented, I. 105.
- the noblest gift of Christ to his church, III. 201—203.
 - to be revered, III. 315—321.
- Commandments*, the ten, promulged and explained, II. 533—540.
- obedience thereto rewarded, III. 71—93, 97—110.
 - life or death the consequence of keeping them, III. 327, 328.
 - easy to be observed, III. 325, 326.
- Communication* with heathens to be avoided, III. 124—136.
- Conduct*, in the sanctuary, what, III. 205—219.
- Confession*, the second step to repentance, III. 268, 269.
- free and ingenuous, its power, III. 541.
- Confirmation*, establishes those who are built in Christ, I. 227.
- the completion of baptism, I. 229.
 - ordained, III. 260—264, 273.
 - necessity thereof, III. 260, 273.
- Connivance*, guilty, its effects, II. 193, 194.
- Consolation*, in sufferings, whence best drawn, I. 82, 84.
- Constantine*, the first christian emperor, how encouraged to victory, I. III.
- Conscience*, its office of judging, I. 213.

I N D E X.

- Conscience* called a God within us, I. 217.
Contradiction of two passages reconciled, IV. 18.
Corruption cannot see God, II. 580
Courage without meekness, is nothing but rage, II. 112.
Covenant of grace, made with *Adam*, II. 55.
 —a new one, with *Noah*, II. 71.
 —————a type of confirmation, II. 73.
 —the second by the holy Spirit, I. 290—201.
 —————why called the everlasting covenant, I. 201.
 —the term fell into disuse, and why, I. 205.
 —excellencies and use of it, 195—231.
Covetousness, the nature of it, I. 394. IV. 83—95.
 —first betrayed man to sin, I. 394.
 —punished, IV. 119, 120.
 —of *Gehazi* punished, IV. 104, 119—121.
Creation, performed by the *Son*, II. 6.
 —life therein given by the *Holy Ghost*, II. 6.
 —history of the, III. 340—354.
Cross, the death of Christ thereon, foretold, I. 72, 133, 134.
 —sign of it, appeared, Pref. 3.
 —to be taken up by christians, I. 87.
 —the reverence for it, perverted by the Papists, IV. 146.
Curse, of a parent, to be dreaded, II. 148.
Cursing, where and when allowable, III. 446, 447.
Cyrus, an emblem of Christ, I. 251.
 —why said to be raised from the north and the east, I. 251.
 —foretold as a worshipper of Christ as God, and as a conqueror,
 200 years before his birth, I. 251.
 —a bird of the east, I. 335, 336.
 —and *Darius*, both abhorred and destroyed idols, I. 329, 330.

D.

- DANGER* of touching the ministers of God, IV. 25—29.
Daniel, an example of penitence, II. 325—331.
 —his prayer, II. 326, 327.
 —history of his being exposed to the lions, IV. 336—353.
Darkness, what, II. 8, 9.
 —not a creature of God, II. 8.
David, his victory over *Goliath*, III. 527—530.
 —————a type of the conquest over sin, III. 528.
 —a type of Christ, III. 528—538.
 —reproved by *Nathan*, *ibid.*
 —mourns for *Abjalom*, III. 555.
 —numbers the people, IV. 14.
 —the only man to whom the choice of his punishment was left,
 IV. 17.
Day, what, II. 9.
 —of *Midian*, what, I. 135.

I N D E X.

- Day of God, a day of justice, I. 390, 391.*
Death, the penalty of murder, II. 85.
 —hath no more power, II. 469.
 —the wages of sin, II. 474.
Deborah, her victory, III. 423—433.
 —a type of the triumph of grace over nature, III. 419.
 —of the Spirit, III. 419.
 —her triumphal song, III. 434—451.
Deuteronomy, book of, a prelude to the gospel, Pref. 3.
Devil, an enemy to the church, III. 19, 21.
Desire, the right use of that passion, IV. 530—552.
Disappointments, criminal, their effects, II. 177.
Dislike of a king's commands, no excuse for disobedience, IV.
 15.
Disobedience, its deformity, IV. 226—236.
Divine right of king's, what, III. 18.
 —justice, its severity, IV. 131—141.
 —the standing rule of, IV. 133.
Docetæ, a set of heretics, confuted, I. 115, 116, 146.
Doctrines favoured by the church in the choice of her lessons
 are,
 —the *Millenium*,
 —Christ's reign on earth with his saints,
 —the first and second resurrection not to be con-
 demned,
 —Christ's local descent into hell,
Doxology of the Christians, called a new song in the prophets, I.
 56, 57.
 —Christ glorified therein, I. 86.
Dress, what is meant by it, I. 18.
Drunkenness, an emblem of man's fallen state, I. 352, 353.
Duty to God, is piety, III. 456.
 —to our neighbours, is righteousness, *ibid.*
 —to ourselves, is sobriety, *ibid.*
Duties, between pastor and people, III. 315—321.
 —matters and servants, IV. 579—590.
 —parents and children, IV. 591—609.
Dust, hiding in it, what, I. 30.

E.

- EARTH, to shake terribly, in a twofold sense, I. 32.*
Eden, the garden of, planted, II. 29.
Education, a good, the best means for true piety, III. 117, 121,
 122.
Egyptians their first-born slain, II. 447, 455.
 —are drowned in the *Red Sea*, II. 476—487.
 —prefigures baptism, II. 487.
Elijah, his history, IV. 42—47, 59—93.

Enemies,

I N D E X.

- Enemies*, of the church, who, III. 19.
Enthusiasm and hypocrisy, their complicated guilt, I. 267. III. 17.
Envy, its ill effects, III. 564.
Epidemical sins forerun the ruin of a nation, IV. 260—269.
Epiphany, a name first given to the 12 days of *Christmas*, then afterwards continued to the 12th only, I. 272.
 ——— called the *Holy Lights*, and the *Theophany*, *ibid.*
 ——— three great manifestations of Christ therein, *ibid.*
 ——— the benefit thereof, I. 375.
Error and unbelief, how punished, I. 108, 152.
 ——— caution against it, *ibid.*
Esau, type of a bad repentance, II. 142, 143.
 ——— forfeiteth the blessings which *Jacob* obtains, II. 145—168.
 ——— his tears, not of repentance, but from spite, II. 159.
Essay, plan of this, from Lord *Bacon*, Pref. 25.
 ——— method of reading it, Pref. 29.
Eternal life, the second gift of God, II. 475.
Eve, the first woman so named, II. 53. See *Woman*.
Evil, not to be done, that good may ensue, II. 113.
 ——— kings, enemies of the church, III. 22.
Excision, what, and the reasons of it, I. 200.
 ——— denounced against the soul, *ibid.*
Excommunication, probably the mark on *Cain*, II. 113.
Ezekiel, sent to the reprobate *Jews* in *Babylon*, III. 237—244.

F.

- FAITH*, an implicit, not required by God, I. 13.
 ——— not contradictory to reason, *ibid.*
 ——— represented by a flower, I. 25, 40.
 ——— superior to reason, *ibid.*
 ——— its proper bound, I. 25.
 ——— the salt of the soul, II. 69.
 ——— mistakes therein, II. 77.
 ——— in God's mercy through Christ, the first means to repentance, II. 79.
 ——— the eye and ear of the soul, II. 115.
 ——— man is blind without it, I. 356.
 ——— of a *Jew*, how different from that of a Christian, I. 376.
 ——— obedience the life of it, I. 378, 379.
 ——— the means of justification and life, I. 377.
 ——— evidences of the Christian, IV. 376—394.
 ——— the sure ground of religious assurance, *ibid.*
 ——— inculcated, IV. 46—67.
 ——— its essential properties, IV. 48—53.
 ——— its triumph over error and infidelity, IV. 54—67.
 ——— its full assurance, IV. 106, 117.
 ——— the just shall live by it, IV. 389.
False prophets flatter, IV. 97—99.
 ——— described and reprov'd, IV. 250—259.

False

I N D E X.

- False prophets* enemies to Christ, IV. 22.
 ————teachers, how to guard against, III. 220—228, 330.
 ————how known, III. 330—337.
Famine, falls heavier on the poor than the rich, IV. 17.
Fasting, its qualifications and promises, I. 403.
 ————rules and motives of, I. 400, 401.
 ————power ascribed to it, I. 402.
 ————the virtues which should attend it, I. 401, 402.
 ————the snares to which it is exposed, I. 401.
 ————a means of shunning uncleanness, II. 169.
Favours, six, to be reflected on, II. 568—583.
Fear of man, weak and unreasonable, and an indignity to God, I. 348, 349.
 ————and love of God, motives to it, I. 220—222.
 ————of God, what, III. 122, 123.
 ————a snare to many, IV. 155, 159.
 ————the right use of that passion, IV. 530, 552.
Festivals, why the three principal have preceding and following days to be observed, I. 1.
Filial obedience rewarded, IV. 213—225.
Fire, elementary inclosed in light, II. 10, 22—24.
 ————the first created element, II. 10.
 ————enlightened the world before the sun was made, II. 12, 22—24.
Firmament, what, II. 11.
Flesh, permitted to be eaten, IV. 214, 215.
Forgetfulness of providence, its effects, III. 139—147.
Forgiveness of sins by the satisfaction of Christ, I. 357—360.
 ————joy to heaven and earth, I. 373, 374.
Fornication and adultery, their effects, III. 59—63.
Fortitude, Christian, what, IV. 156, 157.
 ————inforced, IV. 239—249.
Frauds, those called pious, not to be used, II. 150.
Freedom of will proved, III. 26, 29.

G.

- GALILEE*, its name and inhabitants, whence, I. 130.
Gates, of the church, and of heaven, to whom open, I. 77.
Gentiles and *British* isles happy in the gospel, I. 126.
 ————represented by those afar off, I. 396.
 ————their call to the church typified, I. 380.
Giants, in the world, II. 63.
Gifts, none to appear without before the Lord, III. 240.
Giver of life, a title of the Holy Ghost, II. 6.
God, what he is, II. 4, 11, 35.
 ————the sole author of the being of all things, II. 27.
 ————first cause of all things, *ibid.*

I N D E X.

God THE SON pronounces sentence on our fallen parents, II. 47.
48.

- long suffering, and compassionate, II. 62, 63.
- wills the salvation of all men, II. 74.
- the final loss of any man, not imputable to him, *ibid.*
- his dispensations many and different, how, I. 393.
- instances of tempting him, I. 406.
- his word, the sword of Christ, I. 243.
- bows and arrows of, *ibid.*
- his mouth, a sharp sword, *ibid.*
- mighty to save, I. 373.
- hardens *Pharaoh's* heart, II. 258.
- a caution to Christians, *ibid.*
- THE SON, all the visible appearances in the *Old Testament* were of him, III. 374, 375.
- shews danger that we may prize deliverance, IV. 142, 149.
- sole fountain of all power, III. 2, 3.
- his kind expostulation with his church, IV. 376—387.
- Good, all the works of the creation pronounced so by God, II. 11—22.
- no doing of any, but by the grace of God, through faith in Christ, II. 22.
- Friday*, why so called, II. 361.
- proper lessons for, II. 363—395.
- Gospel, abuse and rejection of it fatal, I. 126.
- opposition to it foretold, I. 246.
- peace and war the effects of it, I. 245, 246.
- foretold as the second law of God, I. 244.
- his gifts and privileges, I. 375.
- Governors of the church, who, III. 1—3.
- to be obeyed, III. 13.
- Grace and free-will, how consistent and co-operative, I. 141.
- first promised to man, II. 49.
- the second covenant, *ibid.*
- ordinary, and extraordinary, I. 362.
- divine, its unlimited freedom and power, I. 366.
- food to the soul, as meat is to the body, I. 36, 374.
- there is only wanting an appetite for it, and to be asked, I. 358.
- danger of losing the day of, I. 391.
- promises of it, mixed with threats, I. 391, 392.
- gifts of, III. 311—320.
- not to be mistaken, III. 311—321.
- preventing, comes also to the wicked, III. 22.
- Graceless men, sometimes the instruments of grace to others, III. 37.
- Grapes, and wild grapes, what they represent, I. 41.
- Grief, should be for the crime, not the punishment, II. 157.
- Grounded staff in *Isaiab*, xxx. 32. what meant by it, I. 109, 110, 133, 134.

I N D E X.

H.

- HALF* penitent, what, III. 522.
- Hand* of God, what, I. 349.
- Hanging*, an accursed death, III. 62.
- Hannab's* thanksgiving for *Samuel*, III. 462—470.
- Happiness*, only in God through Christ, I. 369, 397.
- true, only found in godliness, IV. 504—529.
- Heart*, alone sanctifies the altar, III. 33.
- Hearts* of men in the hand of God, III. 564.
- Heavenly* mindedness inculcated, III. 144—203.
- Hell*, the nature thereof, I. 83.
- for whom prepared and enlarged, I. 44.
- why said to be prepared of old for the king, I. 112.
- represented by *Tophet*, I. 111.
- descent of Christ into it, how understood by our church, I. 360.
- its pains explained, II. 487.
- nor wicked men, can prevail against the church, III. 31.
- Herefy* of *Arian* confuted, [see *Christ*] I. 151.
- of Dr. *Clarke*, and his false quotation in support of it, censured and corrected, I. 35.
- Hezekiah*, his prayer, a good pattern, IV. 155, 161.
- Holy Ghost*, his fruits, I. 280, 281, III. 221, 222—228.
- the giver of life, II. 6.
- moving on the waters, a type of baptism, II. 13.
- forsakes mankind on the fall, II. 40.
- restored upon penitence, II. 44.
- communion of, a particular privilege of the Christian church, I. 104.
- conquers sin, I. 136.
- his gifts, III. 231—264, 283—294, 311.
- foretold, I. 121, 122.
- blessed fruits of them, *ibid.*
- the use of them, III. 297—310.
- to whom dispensed, and when, I. 104.
- office of, III. 231, 287—294, 295.
- nature of, III. 231, 287—294.
- descent of the, III. 245.
- power of, III. 249, 287—294, 329—337.
- promised, IV. 371—374.
- Holy* ground, what, II. 223.
- Week*, its mysteries and proper lessons, II. 244, 246.
- Thursday*, why so called, II. 338.
- orders, not to be rashly engaged in, III. 3.
- Horn*, an emblem of strength, applied to Christ, I. 38.
- House* of prayer, what, I. 379.
- the blessing and joy of frequenting it, I. 380.

I N D E X.

- Humility*, the fourth means of repentance, II. 82.
 ——— what, II. 82. III. 459—461.
 ——— a sure effect of Christianity, I. 31.
 ——— the only way to glory, *ibid.*
 ——— deeper its root, the better its fruit, I. 178, 179.
 ——— enforced by the example of Christ, I. 147, 148.
 ——— its properties and effects, I. 372.
 ——— a holy charm, I. 392.
 ——— inculcated, III. 463—470, 486—489.
Hypocrisy and self indulgence, dangerous rocks, II. 142, 143.
 ——— of *Joseph's* mistress, II. 177.
 ——— its heinousness, IV. 89, 90.
 ——— its effect, in trouble, IV. 157.
 ——— detested by God, III. 25. IV. 260—269.
 ——— condemned, IV. 291—310.

I.

- I AM*, a name of God, its meaning, II. 222, 223.
Idols, *Heb.* nothing, I. 33.
 ——— they and their worshippers are deaf and blind, I. 260.
 ——— challenged to vindicate themselves, I. 249, 261.
 ——— judged and condemned, I. 249—253.
Idolaters, commanded to be slain, II. 563.
 ——— to be punished with death, III. 220—228.
Idolatry debases human nature, I. 29, 30.
 ——— most opposite to Christianity, *ibid.*
 ——— *Heathen* and *Romish*, how they differ, I. 323.
 ——— of the *Arians* and *Romanists*, I. 328.
 ——— first probable rise thereof, I. 332, 333.
 ——— stupidity and profaneness of it, I. 333.
 ——— arguments against it, I. 334, 335.
 ——— often the consequence of wicked teachers, I. 385, 386.
 ——— is the use of images in religious worship, I. 322.
 ——— folly in every sense, I. 319, 320.
 ——— what, II. 554—556.
 ——— punished, II. 555—557.
 ——— its great heinousness, III. 72—80, 113—123.
 ——— places thereof to be destroyed, III. 206, 207.
 ——— forbidden, III. 413, 414.
 ——— to be suppressed, IV. 142, 144—146.
 ——— two victories over, IV. 324—353.
Jehovah's fire, i. e. the Lord will provide, II. 375.
Jerusalem, the figure of God's church, I. 175.
 ——— threatened with destruction, I. 73.
Jesus power of that name, III. 266, 267.
Jews, why forsaken of God, I. 29.
 ——— to be saved, and why, I. 214.

I N D E X.

- Jews* dispersed, the gathering them a type of Christ's gathering his church, I. 380.
- in covenant, signified by those that are *near*, I. 390.
- and infidels, see no beauty in Christianity, I. 356.
- why the observance of their law done away in Christ, I. 232, 233.
- to be restored, IV. 293.
- their destruction foretold, IV. 311—320.
- cause of it, IV. *ibid.*
- their calamities, inexpressible by sorrow, *ibid.*
- Immortality* of the soul proved, III. 37.
- Impenitent* sinners, their case, IV. 271—290.
- Infidelity*, want of ingenuity rather than of faith, I. 377.
- how to be cured, III. 359.
- Ingratitude*, its effects, III. 134—147.
- condemned, IV. 291—310.
- Innocence*, bold to vindicate itself, III. 7.
- Instruction*, strongly enforced, IV. 470—475, 487—503.
- Inward* piety enforced, III. 170.
- Isles* of the sea, what meant by them, I. 276, 277.
- Israelites* department from *Egypt*, II. 454—463.
- murmur, II. 488, 489.
- in the wilderness, a type of the infant church, II. 527, 528.
- their future glory, III. 50—58.
- Job*, book of, its antiquity and design, Pref. 3.
- John Baptist*, herald of Christ, III. 355.
- a type of man in the state of nature, III. 361.
- his baptism, that of repentance, III. 362.
- Joseph*, his chastity an example of temperance, II. 175.
- his history, II. 172—218.
- a pattern of meekness, II. 179.
- Joshua*, a type of Jesus, II. 433.
- why but two chapters out of his book for the whole *Sundays* service, III. 395.
- his success, a prophecy of that of the gospel, *ibid.*
- victories of the *Jews* under him, types of the Christians under Jesus, *ibid.*
- his conquests, III. 397—409.
- commands the sun to stand still, III. 400, 401.
- how that was done, III. 401, 402.
- prophetic of the light of the gospel, III. 403.
- his exhortation to the people before his death, III. 411.
- Josiah*, his piety a great example, IV. 169—171.
- orders the reading the law, *ibid.*
- cleanses the temple, IV. 170, 171.
- Joy*, the right use of that passion, IV. 530, 539—541.
- spiritual and worldly, distinct, I. 131—133.
- the effects of it resemble fear, I. 276.
- in persecutions, the grounds of it, 281, 343.

I N D E X.

- Joy*, sorrow turned into it on the birth of Christ, I. 362.
Judah and *Jerusalem*, what they mean, I. 24.
Judgment, *Zion* redeemed with, I. 19.
 ————— particular and general, I. 37, 54—56.
 ————— foretold, I. 49.
 ————— particular emblems of general, I. 52.
 ————— faith, a defence against it, I. 344.
 ————— general, a day of joy to those who love Christ, I. 64, 65.
 ————— rash, inexcusable, I. 208.
 ————— not forgot in mercy, and *vice versa*, and why, I. 381.
Judgments, the end and design of them, [see *Afflictions*], I. 18, 81, 82.
 ————— denounced for the general corruption of a people, IV. 182—189.
 ————— of the great, IV. 200—213.
Justification, what, I. 360, 361.
 ————— of two kinds, 1. Universal. 2. Partial, I. 361—364.
 ————— who partakers of it, *ibid.*
 ————— confirmed in baptism, by faith, I. 364, 377.
 ————— infants dying unbaptized partakers of the first, I. 362.

K.

- KING*, [see *Christ*].
 ————— the reigning, is the power ordained by God, IV. 125.
Kingdom, [see *Christ*].
 ————— of *Satan*, how subdued, I. 79, 80, 84, 85.
Kings have a right to allegiance, III. 494.
 ————— their duty to reform abuses, IV. 142.
 ————— good, sometimes suffer for their peoples vices, IV. 180.
Knowledge of God, when without morality, is hypocrisy, II. 56.
 ————— without charity, is heresy or infidelity, II. 57.
Koran, *Daiban*, and *Abiram*, their rebellion, III. 5—12.
 ————— swallowed up, III. 12.

L.

- LAMB*, who it represents, I. 44.
Lame man, cured by virtue of the name of Jesus, II. 520, 521.
Languages, but one in the world before *Babel*, III. 275, 276.
 ————— *Hebrew* that one, III. 255.
 ————— confused at *Babel*, III. 279, 280.
Law restored, III. 162, 163.
Lazarus, his resurrection, cause of the *Jews* malice against Christ, II. 302—308.
Leaven, its meaning, II. 451.
Lent, the season for repentance, II. 4.
 ————— the intention of the church in its offices, II. 107—109.
 ————— the accepted time, II. 145.
Lessons, their original, Pref. 2, 10.

I N D E X.

- Lessons*, reason and design of them, Pref. 2, 10, 21.
 —the best sermons, *ibid.*
 —way and manner of reading them, Pref. 10—19.
 —to be distinguished in giving them out, Pref. 10, 18.
 —*Proper*, the design and method of the author in studying them, and the time employed therein, Pref. 19, 20.
 —duty and benefit of hearing the church in the study of them; evil of neglect; and the points proposed in the comments on them, Pref. 20—24.
 —sense of them mystical, allegorical and evangelical, *ibid.*
Light, how created, II. 7.
 —a creature of God, II. 8.
 —its division from darkness, what it means, II. 8, 9.
 —uncreated, eternal, and coeval with God, II. 9.
 —of the Lord, what, I. 28.
 —an emblem of joy, I. 106.
 —rising from darkness, a type of baptism, II. 9.
 —————a type of *Sunday*, the first day of the week, II. 10.
 —————a type of Christ's rising from death, II. 10.
 —of reason, the first light given to the church, II. 76.
 —of *Revelation* the second, —————*ibid.*
 —of the Gospel, the third, —————*ibid.*
 —of glory, at the second coming of Christ, the fourth and last, II. 77.
 —of reason typified by the *Tzohar*, II. 76.
 —of revelation, —by the *Schechinah*, &c. *ibid.*
 —————obscured by the *Romanists*, II. 78.
Lot, his hospitality, II. 109—111.
 —his offering his daughter to the men of *Sodom*, how to be understood, II. 113.
 —his wife changed to a pillar of salt, II. 122.
 —————cause of that change, II. 123.
 —————a figure of the carnal church, *ibid.*
 —an emblem of imperfect and frail obedience, II. 128, 374.
Love, casteth out sufferings as well as fear, II. 141.
 —to the church, promised for ever, II. 322, 323.
 —of God, the impulse of *Abraham's* offering. II. 122. III. 130, 374.
 —the right use of that passion, IV. 530, 534—542.
Low, none so but God can raise, II. 230.
Lust, the first inlet of corruption into the world, II. 63.
 —mult be punished, II. 167.
 —its effects, III. 61.
Lye, the first, told by the serpent to *Eve*, II. 39. IV. 27.
Lying, its heinousness, IV. 27—35.
 —ought not to be used on any account, IV. 137.

I N D E X.

M.

- MAGISTRATES* avaritious, infect the community, I. 17.
Magic, reality of it may be proved, III. 35.
Man carnal, his character, I. 5.
 —inconsiderateness the cause of his brutishness, I. 6.
 —a little world, II. 17.
 —passions in him, like the created animals, II. 17.
 —created, II. 18.
 —how in resemblance of God, II. 19, 85.
 —endowed with reason, II. 19.
 —lost the image of God by his fall, II. 20.
 —made a living soul, II. 28.
 —placed in *Eden*, II. 29.
 —forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge, II. 30.
 —cloathed with glory before the fall, II. 34, 35.
 —eats the forbidden fruit, II. 40.
 —perceives himself naked, II. 41.
 —his sentence pronounced, II. 51.
 —turned out of paradise, II. 56.
 —how in the image of God, II. 85.
Manna, sent to the *Israelites*, II. 500—511.
 —what a type of, II. 503—508.
Marriage instituted, I. 309, 310, II. 33, 34.
 —a type of the union of Christ with his church, *ibid.*
 —into irreligious families, dangerous to virtue, II. 62.
 —generally unhappy, IV. 131—135.
 —the reverence and honour due to it, I. 309, 310.
Matter, not pre-existent, but created by God, II. 27.
Mercy, how reconciled with justice, I. 345.
Mercies past and present, earnest of future, I. 258.
 —temporal are types of spiritual, I. 262, 263, 301.
 —not seen nor laid hold of, even by *Zion*, I. 302.
 —promised to the penitent, III. 322—325. IV. 361—374.
Messiah, [see *Christ*, *Prophecies*].
 —expected by the *Gentiles* as well as the *Jews*, III. 58.
Millennium, proofs for and against it, I. 60—62.
 —explains the obscure prophecy of *Isaiab* xxiv. 22, 23. I. 142, 143, 283.
 —right use of believing it, I. 62, 63.
 —restitution of all things then, I. 142.
Ministers of Christ stiled watchmen, I. 382. IV. 388—403.
 —the fatal effects of their abusing their holy function, I. 383—385.
 —of God, who, III. 1—3.
 —their badness does not destroy the efficacy of the sacraments, III. 14, 15.

I N D E X.

- Ministers* exhorted to diligence, IV. 388—403.
Monarchs are ministers of God, I. 146.
Moral law given, II. 529.
 —rehearsed, II. 530—539.
Morality inculcated in the *Proverbs*, IV. 451—470, 504—529.
Mortification, the third means of repentance, II. 80, 81.
Moses, a preacher and expounder of the law, I. 219.
 —in harmony with St. *Paul*, I. 220, 221.
 —called to deliver *Israel*, 220, 235.
 —history of his proceedings in that effect, II. 220—273.
 —breaks the tables, II. 561.
 —intercedes with God for the people, II. 557—565.
Mourning, a preparative to joy in the spiritual life, I. 118, 119.
Murder, forbidden, II. 85.
 —its heinousness, III. 546, 547.
Murmurings forbidden, II. 498, 499.

N.

- NAAMAN's* leprosy cured, IV. 104—107.
 —a type of baptism, IV. 105.
Natoth, falsely put to death, IV. 85—90.
Nakedness, not perceived in the state of innocence, II. 39.
 —first perceived by the fall, II. 40, 41.
 —covered first by fig-leaves, II. 40.
 —next by skins of beasts, II. 53, 54.
New heavens and new earth promised, IV. 625, 626.
Noah, an example of virtue, II. 65, 66.
 —the first who is called *just*, II. 66.
 —ordered to build an ark, II. 69.
 —God makes a covenant with him, II. 71.
 —blessed by God, II. 82.
 —a second *Adam*, II. 83.
 —the covenant with him renewed, II. 87.
 —the rainbow, a mark thereof, II. 88, 89.
 —and his sons go out of the ark, II. 90.

O.

- OATHS* to God not to be broken, IV. 337, 338.
Obedience, to be rewarded with victory, III. 124.
 —inculcated, III. 409—418. IV. 48—67, 404—424.
 —what, III. 452.
 —rule of, III. 453.
 —partial, leads to reprobation, III. 526. IV. 25—39.
 —too common, IV. 131, 142.
 —manner of, III. 453.
 —degrees of, III. 454—456.

Obedience,

I N D E X.

- Obedience*, imperfect, of no value, III. 511—523.
 ————more worth than sacrifice, III. 523.
Obstructions to a life of piety, whence they arise, III. 533, 534.
Oeconomy, excellent lessons for, IV. 568—579.
Operation, of spiritual life, of instantaneous faith, IV. 77—82.
Opinion, not to entertain a bad one of others, II. 106.
 ————none to be persecuted for, III. 228.
Oppressor and his rod, who and what, I. 134, 135.
Ordinances and means of religion, how rendered effectual, I. 399—403.

P.

- PAINTING* of the face condemned, IV. 129, 130.
Paradise, a better to be gained than that which is lost, I. 387, 395.
Parents, wicked, entail a curse on their children, IV. 1—9.
Paschal Lamb, a type of Christ, *ibid.*
Passions, the right use of them, IV. 530—552.
Passover instituted, II. 441.
 ————Christ the true, II. 441.
Peace perfect, what, when, and to whom, I. 77, 78.
 ————for whom ordained, I. 83.
 ————and righteousness, are inseparable, I. 123, 124.
 ————being twofold is twice repeated, *I/a.* lviii. 19, I. 396.
 ————none for the wicked, I. 397.
 ————why said to be created of God, I. 396.
Penitent sinners, their case, IV. 270—290.
Pentacost, what, III. 229.
 ————design of that festival, *ibid.*
 ————answers to the Jews feast of weeks, *ibid.*
People of God, only saved by Jesus, II. 227.
 ————good, sometimes suffer for a wicked king, IV. 180, 181.
Perfection, what it is, II. 66.
Perjury, its great ill, IV. 186.
Persecution, its motives, III. 22.
Pestilence, equal on rich and poor, IV. 12.
Phinehas, his zeal, III. 59—70.
Piety, its triumph over error, IV. 324, 325.
Plagues of Egypt, and their meanings; I. 246—276.
Paints preparatory to repentance, II. 4.
Power of the church, IV. 123.
Prayer obtains rain, IV. 65—67.
 ————for illumination in the use of this work, Pref. 26, 27.
 ————of faith explained, and its conditions, I. 348, 349, 405, 406.
 ————the fifth means of repentance, II. 82.
 ————subject and rules of it, I. 271, 406.

I N D E X.

- Prayer* for the people, a pastoral duty, III. 500.
 —a property of faith, IV. 52, 53.
Praying with the spirit, and with understanding, their difference, III. 304, 310.
Prefaces to the *Lessons*, their design, Pref. 6—20.
Pride, to be checked, II. 196.
 —its effects, III. 139—147, 275—279. IV. 15.
 —arguments against, III. 168—171.
 —its heinousness, III. 275—279.
 —its downfall, IV. 228—230.
 —its impiety, IV. 321.
Priesthood of Christ, I. 289.
 —comfort thence arising, I. 288.
 —honour and sacredness of it, I. 289.
 —danger of intruding into it, *ibid.*
 —ministration of intruders therein, void, *ibid.*
 —the *Jewish*, given to *Levi*, III. 165.
Promises of God to *Abraham*, fulfilled at *Easter*, II. 137, 376.
Prophanation of the dead to be shunned, IV. 176.
 —disquiet the dead, IV. 206, 207, 212.
Prophecies concerning Christ, his religion and people fulfilled, I. 121—150.
 —attention to be paid to them, and their completion, I. 254.
 —fulfilled in the swift progress of the gospel, I. 244.
 —in the opposition to the gospel, I. 245, 246.
 —in the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, I. 248, 249.
 —in the raising of *Cyrus*, I. 252.
 —in the new scene of the eternal salvation, I. 265.
 —of the rejection of Christ by the *Jews*, *ibid.*
 —of the birth of Christ in the night, I. 274.
 —of the worship of the wise men of the *East*, I. 275.
 —of the universality of the church, and how far fulfilled, I. 275, 285.
 —of the children of *Abraham*, being types of the *Gentiles* union with Christ, I. 276.
 —of the *Gentiles*, evangelized, I. 292—298.
 —of the quick conversion, unity, &c. of the first Christians, I. 277.
 —of the *Gentiles* building the walls of the christian church, I. 278, 279.
 —of kings ministering to the church, I. 279.
 —being her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers, I. 305—307.
 —of the waste of the nations that will not serve Christ, I. 279.
 —of persecutors turned to defenders, I. 281.
 —of the name of *JESUS* before his birth, I. 292.
 —of his labour spent in vain among the *Jews*, I. 294.

Prophecies

I N D E X.

Prophecies of his being despised by men, and abhorred by the *Jews*, I. 298, 354.

— of his being worshipped by princes; when fulfilled, I. 298, 307.

— of the heavenly song at the nativity, I. 301, 302.

— of the *Gentiles* call to the church, I. 304, 305

— of baptism, the name, sign and grace, *viz.* water and the Spirit, I. 315.

— of the restoration of the *Jews*, I. 343.

— of another law besides that of *Moses*, *ibid.*

— have converted several unbelievers, I. 354.

— of Christ, can be applied to no other person, I. 357.

— of the death of Christ, II. 332, 333.

— of the return of the *Jews*, II. 403—420.

— of Christ's triumph over hell, II. 409.

Prophecy, a fertile field, I. 50.

— not to be confined in the interpretation, I. 51.

— of swords and spears, beat into plow-hares and pruning-hooks, how fulfilled, I. 27, 28.

— a gift of the *Holy Ghost*, III. 296—310.

— spirit of, falls upon *Saul* at *Naioth*, III. 312—314.

Prophets true, will tell truths though unwelcome, IV. 97—100.

Proverbs of *Solomon*, their excellent lessons, IV. 417—599.

Providence, dispensations of, suited to the behaviour of men, I. 130, 131, 179, 180.

— its ways sure, yet smooth and easy, I. 146.

— men only the instruments of it, I. 176.

— interposed in the affair of *Esau* and *Jacob*, II. 147.

Public crimes of princes, become national, IV. 1—9.

— repentance, best means to remove public calamities, IV. 16.

— mischiefs, caused by private vices, IV. 185.

Q.

QUADRAGESIMA Sunday, why so called, II. 3.

Quinquagesima, ————— *ibid.*

Quakers, hold a wrong principle, III. 263.

R.

RAINBOW, the mark of God's second covenant with man, II. 88, 89, 94, 95.

— the first seal thereof, II. 88.

Ravishment, history of *Dinah's*, II. 162—169.

Reason, the first light given to the church, II. 76.

— the light of, typified by the *Tzohar*, *ibid.*

Reasoning of God, or with God, very different, I. 14.

— the latter encouraged, *ibid.*

I N D E X.

- Rebekah*, a type of the church, II. 151.
Redemption, how effected, I. 258.
 ——— the process and scheme of it, I. 268.
Regeneration effected by Christ, I. 259.
 ——— a new birth in baptism, *ibid.*
 ——— by a new creation, I. 284, 295.
 ——— by the co operation of the *Holy Trinity*, *ibid.*
Religion external, of no value without the heart, I. 10, 11.
 ——— gives no pretext to take another's goods, IV. 13.
Religious fear twofold, III. 109, 110.
 ——— laudable and pious, *ibid.*
 ——— base and vicious, *ibid.*
Remnant, shall be saved, IV. 269—271, 265.
Repent, why necessary so to do, II. 5.
 ——— of what we are to, *ibid.*
 ——— how we ought to, *ibid.*
Repentance, *Lent* the season for, II. 4, 64, 65.
 ——— wherein it consists, II. 64, 65.
 ——— knowledge of God necessary to it, *ibid.*
 ——— first mention of it in the scriptures, II. 64.
 ——— its effects, II. 65, 170—172.
 ——— the means thereof, faith, the first, II. 79.
 ——— charity to our neighbours, the second, II. 80.
 ——— mortification and self-denial, the third, II. 80,
 81.
 ——— humility, the fourth, II. 82.
 ——— prayer, the fifth, *ibid.*
 ——— always necessary to be preached, I. 398, 399.
 ——— *Esau* the type of a bad one, II. 142, 143.
 ——— exhortation to it, II. 309, 310.
 ——— a form of, prescribed, *ibid.*
 ——— promised on conditions, II. 311—321.
 ——— of God, what it means, III. 518, 519.
 ——— its power, III. 541—554.
 ——— not to be had without Christ, III. 543.
 ——— a call to, IV. 354—360.
 ——— a method prescribed, *ibid.*
Requisites for ordination, what, IV. 240, 249.
Rest of God, every Christian must strive to enter into it, II. 431—
 437.
Restitution, a proof of true repentance, III. 560, 561.
Resurrection of Christ, commemorated on *Easter Sunday*, II. 464,
 465.
 ——— history of the, II. 547—552.
 ——— day of, the great *Sabbath*, II. 427, 428.
 ——— a new, from sin, II. 467—469.
 ——— its effects, 467—475.
 ——— its reality, II. 488, 490.
 ——— its design and effects, 490—493.

I N D E X.

- Resurrection* of Christ, means to partake of them, II. 493—495.
 ———— *Peter's* sermon on Christ's, II. 488—494.
 ———— must be believed, II. 495.
 ———— implies the immortality of the soul, II. 495—497.
 ———— twofold, of soul and body, II. 512—516.
 ———— proved by the healing the lame man, II. 520—526.
 ———— fully proved, II. 551.
 ———— of the dead, its effects, II. 581.
 ———— ends temporal death, II. 582.
 ———— triumphs over death, II. 581.
Revelation, typified by the *Schechinah*, II. 76.
Revenge, often assumes the form of piety and wisdom, II. 166.
Reverence, due to the clergy and the service, III. 205—219.
Riches, its snares, III. 543.
Righteousness, what, II. 66.
 ———— and *Righteous*, names of Christ, I. 56, 114, 138.
 ———— of the law, in what sense kept by the uncircumcised,
 I. 216.
 ———— moral, a preparation to that of faith, I. 276, 277.
 ———— free from, a mis-translation, II. 473.
 ———— its good effects, IV. 487—503.
Rock, what meant by, I. 30.
Rome, the city of the terrible nation, foretold to fear Christ as God,
 I. 68.

S.

- SABBATH*, how to be observed, I. 407. II. 506, 507.
 ———— every day should be one to a Christian, I. 408.
 ———— instituted, II. 25.
 ———— obligations for our regarding it, *ibid.*
 ———— observation of it, brings a blessing on our labours, II.
 26.
 ———— *Jewish* and Christian, distinguished by the time and
 manner of observing them, I. 408.
 ———— takes up but a seventh part of our time, II. 26.
 ———— keeping it, a token of the covenant between God and
 his people, I. 378.
 ———— the true, what, II. 431.
 ———— breach of, punished, II. 506.
Sacerdotal robe, what, II. 152.
Sacraments, the two christian, intimated in the *Old Testament*, I. 15.
Sacrifices, of divine origin, II. 54.
 ———— typical of the Lamb of God, *ibid.*
 ———— the pledge and symbol of the christian covenant, II.
 54, 55.
 ———— commanded, II. 543—546.
Salvation, a name of Christ, I. 75.
 ———— fixt and unalienable, I. 345.

Salvation,

I N D E X.

- Salvation*, granted only in the church, I. 336—341.
 ————nature and extent of that wrought by Christ, II. 340.
 ————the steps to it, I. 375, 376.
 ————who entitled to it, I. 339, 361—364. [See *Christ*.]
Samuel, ministers to God when but a child, III. 473—481.
 ————called by God, III. 483.
Sanctifying, the first-born, how, II. 429.
 ————a type of the new birth, II. 429, 430.
Sarai, taken by *Pharaoh*, II. 104.
 ————released, II. 105.
 ————an emblem of the church, I. 340, 341.
 ————of good housewives, III. 369, 370.
Saturn's wiles to tempt to sin, IV. 151—153.
Saul, his cruelty to the *Gibeonites*, IV. 1—7.
 ————punished by the death of his sons, IV. 7, 8.
Schism, its nature, IV. 23—30.
 ————its pernicious effects, *ibid*.
 ————generally ends in heresy or atheism, IV. 23—29.
 ————no sacrifices acceptable from its hands, IV. 25—29.
Self-examination, heads thereof, II. 45.
 ————conceit, to be conquered, III. 148—159.
 ————indulgence, its evil effects, IV. 26—35.
Separation from God, what, II. 44.
Septuagesima Sunday, why so called, II. 3.
Sermons, not preferable to the daily service, but better supplied by it, Pref. 7, 21.
Serpent beguiles *Eve*, II. 38, 39.
 ————his sentence thereon, II. 47—49.
Servants of Christ, true, how distinguished, I. 81.
 ————of sin, their wages, II. 474.
Service, divine, should consist of forms of prayer, and why, Pref. 7.
Seventy weeks, how to be understood, II. 331.
Sexagesima Sunday, why so called, II. 3.
Shame, the object and end of it, I. 20.
 ————the consequence of sin, II. 46.
Shepherds, honoured with the first notice of Christ's birth, a lesson to pastors, I. 148, 149.
Sickness, the right use of it, and of recovery from it, I. 189—191.
Sign, or Ensign of the son of man, what, I. 46—48.
Signs, to be asked and received in faith, when offered by God, I. 156, 157.
 ————to refuse them is hypocrisy and presumption, I. 156, 157, 185.
 ————to be set on the good, to distinguish them from the wicked, IV. 625.
Sin, habitual, the symptoms and effects of, I. 45.
 ————obduracy and impenitence therein, punished, I. 46.
 ————introduced by the fall of man, II. 43.

I N D E X.

- Sin*, the root of, where, I. 85.
 —original, the nature thereof, II. 43, 44.
 —and actual, not to be denied by perfectionists, I. 168.
 —how denoted, 269, 363.
 —the object of divine justice and vengeance, I. 208, 209.
 —why called a cloud, I. 210.
 —which blotted out, I. 324.
 —to whom imputed, I. 300.
 —by whom blotted out, I. 221, 301.
 —on condition of repentance, I. 269, 270, 301.
 —is a state of bondage, chains, and death, I. 300.
 —the cause of Christ's sufferings, I. 359.
 —a worse bondage than that of *Egypt*, I. 392.
 —inveterate habits of it, represented by the captivity in *Babylon*, and a return necessary, I. 392.
 —its chain, how, and by whom to be broken, *ibid.*
 —the formal nature of it, how to be treated, I. 392—395.
 —God alone can raise from, II. 238.
 —the worst evil that can come, III. 31.
 —the leprosy of the soul, IV. 105.
Sloth, its effects, IV. 483—486.
Sodom, destroyed, II. 121, 122.
 —its destruction, an example of God's judgment, to the impenitent, II. 108.
 —an emblem of the last destruction of the world, II. 121.
 —its former state, II. 122
 —why *Abraham* allowed, and *Lot* denied to see it burnig, II. 128, 374.
Soldiers of Christ called to fight against reproaches, revilings, afflictions, and torments, I. 346.
Sons of God, the scriptural birth, II. 60.
 —marry the daughters of men, *i. e.* the children of the ungodly, *ibid.*
 —of the forcerers, who, I. 388.
Son, God the, distinguished from the Father, II. 248.
Sorrow for sin, no true repentance, III. 269.
Soul, compared to an empire enslaved, I. 9.
 —of the upright, its happy state after death, I. 387.
Spiritual life, the first gift of God, II. 474.
Spoil divided, what, and by whom, I. 365, 366.
Spots in the professors of Christ, reprov'd, I. 385, 386, 398, 399.
Stars and heavenly bodies, have some influence on earth, III. 450, 451.
State of the dead, II. 409—411.
Stile of this *Essay*, apology for it, Pref. 29.
Stones, smooth, what they signified, in *I/a.* lvii. 6. I. 388.
Subjects, not to censure their prince, IV. 16.

Submission

I N D E X.

- Submission* to God's providence, its great effects, III. 550, 551.
Sun created, II. 14.
Superstition, Jewish and Heathen, in abstaining from certain foods, censured, I. 234—236.
 ————— more zealous than real piety, III. 33.

T.

- TEMPERANCE*, a great virtue, IV. 213—225.
Temptation, the danger of parlying with, II. 39.
 ————— of running into it, II. 162—169.
 ————— to be fled from, not faced, II. 176.
Theology of the Church of England, how best understood, Pref. 24.
 ————— the best bulwark against infidelity, heresy, popery, and schism, Pref. 24.
Tongue, the government of, IV. 530—567.
Tower, an emblem of faith, I. 4.
Towers, what meant by their fall, *Isa.* xxx. 35. I. 105, 106.
Treachery of Jews and Christians, I. 57.
 ————— how punished, I. 58.
Tree of life, II. 29, 30.
 ————— guarded by angels, II. 57.
 ————— of knowledge, II. 29, 30, 38—40.
Trinity, a belief of it a fundamental of the christian religion, I. 217.
 ————— the mystery of God, *ibid.*
 ————— co-operation in the new creation of man, I. 395.
 ————— speaks to the *Messiah*, I. 297.
 ————— acts in the work of redemption, I. 259, 352.
 ————— asserted, I. 317—319.
 ————— alluded to, II. 225. III. 115. IV. 265, 271.
 ————— in man, *viz.* soul, spirit, and body, III. 321, IV. 4, 47.
 ————— faith therein necessary, III. 339.
 ————— the world created by the, III. 340—354.
 ————— proved at *John's* baptism of Christ, III. 355, 365.
 ————— Christ incarnated for a proof of, III. 359.
 ————— a visible emblem of it, vouchsafed to *Abraham*, III. 367—375.
 ————— proved in the blessing of *Sarah*, III. 370—372.
 ————— by *St. John*, III. 383—386.
Troubles, the different behaviour under them, of worldly men and good christians, I. 87—90, 122.
 ————— refuge from them, I. 89, 90.
 ————— support under them, I. 102, 248, 249.
 ————— benefits of them, I. 120.
Trumpet of the gospel, should be ever in our ears, I. 399.
Tythes established, III. 213.

I N D E X.

V.

- VANITIES* and pomps of the world, a snare, I. 390.
Vegetables, created, II. 11, 12.
Vengeance, sure, though slow, IV. 123—130.
Vice, what, IV. 413.
 —its several kinds, IV. 413—416.
Vices, excluding from heaven, I. 43.
Virtue and morality, grounded in the gospel, I. 376.
 —moral, what, III. 456, 457. IV. 408—410.
 —divine, what, *ibid.*
 —its several kinds, IV. 410—413.
Vision of Isaiah, what, how long, I. 4, 5.
Uncleanneſs, to be guarded againſt, II. 168.
 —fasting a means to do it, II. 169.
Ungenerous, to take advantage of others paſſions, II. 166.

W.

- WALKING* with God, what it means, II. 67.
War, falls more heavy on the poor than the rich, IV. 17.
Water, brought from the rock, II. 518.
 —————what it means, II. 518, 519.
 —————what a type of, II. 519.
Waters, what is meant by ſowing by them, I. 125—127.
 —————by the abundance of them, I. 276.
Ways of God, different from thoſe of man, I. 371, 372.
 —of the wicked, muſt be forſaken in time, *ibid.*
Wedding-garment, what, I. 4.
Whitſunday, what it commemorates, and its leſſons, III. 229—274.
Wickedneſs, gradations thereof in different ages, I. 6, 7.
 —enormous, generally its own avenger, IV. 131.
 —its effects, IV. 470—486.
Wicked men, enemies to the church, III. 21.
 —priest, the worſt creature upon earth, III. 471—473.
 —princes and people threatened, IV. 226—236.
Will of God, to be done in earth as in heaven, when, I. 73, 74.
Window in the ark, a miſ-translation, II. 74.
Wine-press, what it represents, I. 40, 41.
Wisdom, what, and its effects, IV. 406—408, 427—437.
Witchcraft and forcery real, III. 270—273.
Woman, created, II. 33.
 —given to man as a companion, *ibid.*
 —is tempted by the ſerpent, II. 39.
 —tempts *Adam*, II. 40.
 —her ſentence pronounced, II. 50.
 —turned out of paradise, II. 56.

Word,

I N D E X.

Word the, seen by *Isaiah* and *St. John*, I. 24, 25.

——goeth forth from *Jerusalem*, I. 27.

Works of christians, by whom wrought for, and in them, I. 83.

——good, established of the gospel, I. 366—388.

——bad, abolished by the gospel, *ibid.*

World, created, not from eternity, II. 27.

——all the nations thereof from one common stock, II. 92.

Y.

YEAR, division of it into solemn seasons of religion, and proper offices, justified, Pref. 25.

——liturgical, when commenced in our church, and why, Pref. 4.

Z.

ZEAL, false, for God, what, III. 16.

——fiery, bad, III. 305.

——for the church, cannot dissolve obligations of justice, IV. 6—9.

——to punish others, often joined with remissness to correct ourselves, IV. 131, 141.

F I N I S.



per

y,

v.

a